

# MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINE

(No. 23. NEW SERIES, SEPTEMBER, 1907)

## THE WANDERINGS OF AMBROSE

### CHAPTER VII.

I AM launched on Alipore society. Aunt Jane has given a dinner-party. I was less morose on that occasion than I might have been, seeing that I am haunted with visions of a lady yearning for encouragement, on account of my letter from Agra. It arrived on the festive evening itself, and was everything I had expected a letter from her would be, fanciful, pretty, a little teasing.

She hoped I was coming to Agra soon, and she was too busy to have missed me in the very least. Forthwith I sat down and accepted an invitation to stay with the General and his wife at Akbar's capital. Nancy would not have been quite pleased perhaps at the eager anticipation with which I chose my dates, knowing as she well does that I would rather not stir from home than be tied to a day or an hour. All the same I don't see why Nancy should trouble her pretty little head about the matter at all. Had I not been steadily in love with her since nursery days? It was only caprice that made me think of another Her so incessantly. It is true caprice is not always easy to manage.

Uncle Robert returned from camp in time for the dinner-party. When I saw him I understood how it was that India is ruled by persuasion instead of by the sword. Loftiness of intellect had stamped itself on the thin worn face, and shone through the tired eyes. He looked strained, as a man who had borne the stress of much heat and indefatigable labour, and kind, as a man who understood other men. No one would go to him for sympathy and find it not, or for justice and be turned away. Doubtless he could be stern : I should not like to cause wilful hurt to my neighbour if Uncle Robert were in the neighbour-

hood, any more than I should care to tread on one of Aunt Jane's dachshunds ; but knowledge had made him infinitely gentle,—a scholar and a ruler combined. Will India be equally fortunate in the new race of men who are springing up, forcing their way through fierce competition with the hurry and impatience of the present generation ? The future, jealously guarding the fate of many nations, disdains a warning.

Aunt Jane wore black silk and family lace. In future, whenever I see that black silk, I know that the occasion merits a grave demeanour, not to say a slight haughtiness of tone and manner. It is time Aunt Jane had an aide-de-camp. I do not doubt that even that glory will shine upon her soon, for all good things come to the deserving eventually, and there are rumours floating in the air ; but for this evening she had only the black silk and six red and gold chuprassies in the hall to support her. I cannot count Uncle Robert, for he had slipped behind the piano, looking nervous ; nor myself, who cowered in agitation on the hearthrug.

It was too bad of Aunt Jane. Of course she did not know about Nancy, and equally of course I have no position in India : I am only a thing to be knocked about between excited adjutants and absent-minded civilians ; but still she need not have deputed me to the youngest rosebud in the room. Had it not been for a subaltern who sat on the other side of this blossoming young womanhood, I should have had to rack my brains for a style of conversation in which I was lamentably deficient ; but the subaltern, who was sandwiched in without a partner after the manner beloved of India, took all responsibility off my hands. He and the Rosebud at once began a system of chaff which, being purely personal, entitled me to leave them alone. Opposite to me sat the commanding officer of a British Infantry regiment, whom I knew well. In England he and his wife were the most charming people in the world, but out here they took themselves seriously. It seems in India that you must either be wrapped in the stiffness of damask or in the pink gauze of frivolity. I have no hesitation in saying that in Piccadilly my friend the Colonel would have listened with the greatest deference to my opinions, political or otherwise ; in India I was not supposed to have any opinions at all. His wife meanwhile had embarked on a career of criticism which envelopes ladies more easily in India than in any other country. She caught my eye once or twice and smiled

encouragingly ; clearly she was pitying me. Aunt Jane caught my eye and did not smile at all ; I had not spoken for two courses, and was miserably conscious of the fact. I saw Uncle Robert struggling bravely with a partner whose ideas I felt convinced could not rise beyond the domestic ; he was a reproach to all men. The lady opposite, in yellow silk with staring eyes, was meditating, I thought, an attack upon myself. Possibly she knew my uncle ; she did.

"I think Lord Vansittart," she began. In my hurry and confusion I turned to my left.

She was a particularly refined-looking woman, with pretty intelligent eyes. The fat little man who had taken her in apparently found her dull, for he bestowed his whole attention on his dinner, which, I can vouch for, was excellent. She seemed neglected and a little grateful at being spoken to. It was possible I might regain my self-esteem, and more than probable that she did not know my uncle.

"I wish," I said, "you would tell me who some of these people are, for I don't know any of them."

She flashed a look of amusement at me. "Shall I introduce myself first ?"

"Please do."

"Well then, if you won't be too horrified, I'm the wife of a Canal-wallah."

It sounded like some sort of executioner ; I begged her to explain. "My husband," she said, "haunts canal-banks, and sometimes I go with him, and sometimes I do not."

"I am glad," I murmured, "that on this occasion—"

She looked more amused still. "You have only just come here, have you not ?" she asked rather irrelevantly. "Shall you stay long ?"

I thought of Agra and felt guilty, but a dinner-party of twenty spreads itself out and Aunt Jane was some distance off. "That depends," I answered cautiously ; "India is large, and there is so much to see."

She sighed. "If it were less large it might be more sociable," she said.

I looked round in some surprise. The little fat man was eating his entrée rather greedily, I thought ; I must say it was a very delicately-flavoured dish. Champagne had loosened the vocal chords and assisted the ideas of most of those present.

Aunt Jane's dinner-table was artistically arranged and becomingly shaded. The Rosebud and the Subaltern were embarked on a perfectly huge flirtation. I began to feel more cheerful myself.

"What do you call this?" I asked.

She looked doubtful. "Of course there is plenty of entertaining," she said; "but people scatter so; you have hardly time to like anyone before they have vanished. In India one has to make friends at first sight."

"And need second sight to do it with."

She nodded. "That's just what makes it so difficult. And yet if there were no moves on, we should all run in grooves too horrible to contemplate. For instance the pink lady over there has been here four years. She imagines herself gifted with dramatic talents, and by right of custom is our tragic heroine, comic actress, skirt-dancer, and opera-singer in one. If anyone were to take her place, or an entertainment were to be given without her assistance, she would have hysterics and go to bed, and the whole Station would be in a turmoil. That is the District Superintendent of Police next her. He is famous for his luncheon parties, but whenever Alipore is being badly burgled he is always absent catching dacoits. The little man who has taken your Aunt in to dinner is the greatest talker in India, and the least truthful; but he is so clever that they say his Department would go to pieces without him. That lady in white, like a bride, has been married three times; she has an affection for subalterns, which they duly return. That ponderous-looking man, whom you would think would never smile again, is the wit of Alipore. He has not spoken at all yet; when he does he is always supposed to say something funny, and the whole table stops talking to listen to him. The very pretty woman on the left of your Uncle is Mrs. Molyneux. Her husband is the man with the weak chin; he is British Cavalry and very rich. She would be more popular if she insisted less upon her social rights. Those two other men over there are in the same regiment and rich too; no dinner-party would be complete without them. Have I gossipped enough?"

"You have," I said, "only just begun. You have learned to discriminate well."

"One learns a great deal," she retorted, "on canal-banks; and I spend much of my time there. It is always a relief to get away from Cantonments, I think; there is no dust or glare on

the canal ; one can gallop for miles along the banks, often in the shade and nearly always over turf. And then it is delicious to sit through the long afternoons, and watch the water swishing past, with the parrots chattering overhead, and the kingfishers dipping just below, and the sunshine pouring through the bamboos in such delicious chequered shades."

"It sounds delightful," I said ; "I must come out and paint it."

"Oh no," she replied, "there is nothing to paint. I have given you the essence of its beauty. A great deal of it is made up of imagination and fresh air. And then one comes back to Cantonments—"

"And to dinner-parties," I suggested.

"And it is like taking a plunge into cold water. Alipore is its own centre ; it revolves round its own axis. You must go round and round or not go at all, and as most of the circles are very narrow, I generally stop outside them."

"Is there no manner of throwing stones to widen them ?" I asked. The lady in yellow had again fixed me with her eye, and again my uncle's name hovered in the air. I pretended deep interest, which indeed was not all pretence, in a little dish of salted almonds immediately in front of me.

"Oh no,"—she looked absolutely horrified. "I haven't got position enough ; you need a great deal of position to be able to throw stones. Oblivion has its compensations though. I am not expected to entertain people I dislike ; it is not necessary for my reputation to go out riding with a young man every other day, and if I don't go to the Club I am not missed. On the whole," she added thoughtfully, "it is rather comfortable not to be missed."

I felt as though I ought to be sorry for her, and yet on the contrary I envied her. I was about to tell her so, when my Aunt cast a forbidding glance round the table and everyone rose. The first part of the programme was over.

As for the second part I maintain that it was entirely Aunt Jane's fault. I tried to slip away into the bridge-room, and she insisted on introducing me to Mrs. Molyneux. I give every credit to that delightful lady for being pretty and charming, but alas, it was the old, old story. She was aware that I painted ; she had seen my pictures ; she had met my sisters ; she had called upon my mother ; finally she knew my uncle. It was too much. I had not travelled half the world's length from

Bond Street in order to turn into Park Lane. At the first decent opportunity I moved away. On a sofa at the other end of the room the Funny Man and the Canal-lady were sitting side by side in stolid silence. I picked up a book of photographs and carried them across to her. We looked at photographs together for half an hour. She was as nice to me as though she was going to see me every day of her life, and I believe she overstayed the time-limit by ten minutes. I was rather nervous when the last of the guests had disappeared, and I looked round for Uncle Robert ; but he had sneaked off. I was left alone with Aunt Jane and the dachshunds. I felt as unhappy as I used to in the days of yore when I was detected by the head-gardener stealing peaches. I could not expect Aunt Jane to sympathise with me. What could she know of canal-banks where the air was as golden as the sunshine, and where the parrots shrieked their way from tree to tree, and the immortal kingfisher dived beneath feathery bamboos ? Her path had always been carpeted direct from Persia, and had wandered through rows of salaaming chuprassies. She was not as bitter as she might have been. She merely remarked grimly : " You should cultivate a less enthusiastic manner, my dear Ambrose."

### CHAPTER VIII.

AUNT JANE settled to take me to Delhi. She said that we could lunch with the Cunninghams in the fort. That seemed to decide her ; it rounded off things nicely, I suppose, and made a sort of centre-peg on which to hang all our indecisions and vagaries. Delhi was only an hour's distance by rail, yet Ramzan accompanied us. I did not ask him to do so ; he accepted the whole responsibility himself ; I have long since ceased to give Ramzan any orders. He never speaks, but I am sure he thinks unutterable things. When I ask him to find my handkerchief or produce some sleeve-links, I do so apologetically. Even Aunt Jane, I believe, has succumbed to his passive stateliness. What passed between them on the occasion of their one awful interview I have never known. I took the opportunity of going for a long ride and losing my way, so that I did not return until past the hour for the late breakfast. Aunt Jane did not reproach me. She was silent and absorbed ; Ramzan was

more dignified than ever, and she has not mentioned his name since ; from which I feel privileged to draw my own conclusions.

Of course we were accompanied by a chuprassi as well. Aunt Jane never stirs without a chuprassi ; indeed it was to his presence that I attributed Ramzan's zeal for travelling. Then there were the dachshunds, and a multitude of other things, too bewildering to mention ; I do not know why it is that people in India cannot go anywhere without taking half their worldly goods with them. I noticed among other objects in the carriage a refreshment-basket packed with sandwiches and oranges and iced drinks (although it was midwinter and bitterly cold), five sofa-cushions, an enormous quantity of papers and magazines, Aunt Jane's work-bag, from which a ball of wool constantly unrolled itself and had to be rescued at the risk of apoplexy from various dustheaps underneath the carriage-seats, all the historical books I had been lately reading on India in general and Delhi in particular (this attention I owe to Ramzan), my paint-box and three sketching-blocks, a pile of rugs, and two sun-umbrellas.

When all these articles had been put away, and the dachshunds had been accommodated with the best sofa-cushions, there was little room for anything else. I detest dachshunds ; they always want the most comfortable corners and the most incessant attention. Between them and the ball of wool and the windows I could not get settled down anyhow. An Indian railway has peculiar draughts of its own. No sooner had I put up one side of windows than the wind veered round and came in at the other ; when it wasn't the wind, it was the sun. Aunt Jane desired the shutters up, and the shutters stuck. Why do shutters always stick on Indian railways ? When I had finished struggling with the shutters and was prepared for rest, I would invariably find that Schnapps had wriggled on to the exact spot on which I had intended depositing myself. In the end I was glad of those iced drinks.

We thundered over the bridge at Delhi (at a snail's pace) about noon. Though fairly worn out with all my unusual exertions I managed to gather sufficient energy to crane my neck out of the window and look upon the historical view. A deep sandy bed intersected with muddy channels lay far below us. Here apparently was spread out Delhi's weekly wash to dry in the sun ; what was not drying was being beaten on stones.

Above the sandy shores in battlemented line, good to look upon, rose Delhi's fort, picturesque and rosy in the bright sunshine, a glimmer of white marble and green trees beyond. I tried to forget the wash and to imagine the elephant-fights in that sandy arena, while a Mogul Emperor and all his gaudy train of chattering courtiers looked on from above, aflame with magnificence and precious stones. Or was it some hated rival chief who was being trampled to death amid the yells of a delighted populace, where now the mild washerman only tramples clothes? I am convinced the world has lost an immortal picture. I was in the throes of inspiration when Schwartz, wriggling his chain round my right leg, dragged me out on to the platform, while Schnapps manœuvred round my left. The shouts of gratified malice from thousands of throats died away into a prolonged argument between Aunt Jane and the chuprassi as to how many of our belongings it would be safe and advisable to leave in the cloak-room; finally I believe we conveyed them all with us. They were bestowed, with some difficulty, together with the dogs, into the carriage that was triumphantly awaiting us. The chuprassi climbed on to the box, thereby forestalling Ramzan's honourable intentions. I sat where I could, and we drove away. Ramzan was the only legacy left to the railway station.

So I was in Delhi at last. We talk with pride of the Tower of London, and the Guildhall, and the Temple, and all our relics of the past, but what can they compare in history, in wonder, in events with the palaces and the ruins of Delhi, alike emblematic of her pomp and her utter desolation? I thought of the carnage that had swept through her streets; I pictured to myself the hordes of invaders who had ravished her treasures; I consoled myself with recollections of the glory that was hers before Aurungzebe stepped forth to a conquest which was never to be realised, I—— “You will like Mrs. Cunningham,” said my Aunt. “She was a Miss Jervoise, I think, Shropshire people. I am not sure whether she is a niece or a cousin of Lord Jervoise, but anyway she is one of the Jervoises and very nice. I am glad we came.” We drove through the fort gateway, sacred with a hundred memories, and alighted at a small square building. Our host helped us to unpack. He was a melancholy man in khaki uniform, and looked as though he had a grievance. Our hostess greeted us enthusiastically, and went on her knees to the dogs. My Aunt stated that she had crowds of shopping to do, and our

host asked by what train we were leaving. In a pause of the conversation, filled up by exclamations of admiration over the beauty of those wretched dachshunds, I remarked to him enthusiastically how lucky he was to be quartered in such a glorious old fort ; I have never seen a man look less pleased at his luck. "It's a dull little hole," he said, "and the heat's terrific."

Thomas the unbeliever would have flourished well in India. One has to take people everlasting at their word about the heat. At the present moment it was so cold in the shade that I would have welcomed a fire. I think Anglo-Indians are inclined to be morbid about hot weather ; it gets on their nerves ; they talk of it incessantly as an English farmer does of the rain, and really a more glorious climate than I have hitherto experienced it would be impossible to imagine. After a great deal of desultory conversation my hostess suggested that Harold should change and take me round the palace, which he did. We accomplished the sight-seeing in ten minutes by his watch. I have a hazy recollection of marble carved to gossamer, of wonderful halls of audience, of inlaid mosaics and cool tempting bath-rooms, of gardens and marble summer-houses and mysterious passages and quaintly carved dwelling-places, and then we hurried back to lunch, which occupied us two hours. Harold was a very monosyllabic individual with a mind far above history. "It's all a disillusion," was the utmost I could drag out of him with regard to the wonders I wished to explore.

In the afternoon we shopped. I purchased a turquoise necklace for Nancy by way of salving my conscience, and then discovered I had no money to pay for it. At that precise moment, with the thoughtfulness that characterised all his movements, Ramzan towered into view behind the dealer, money and all ; I was very much obliged to him as usual and left him to settle the bill. Later we drove out to tea at Humayoon's tomb, taking Delhi's famous mosque on the way. "You can see it very well from the carriage," said my Aunt.

By the time I got to the tomb I had given up history and taken to sketching. "I can't think what you can see in those mounds of mud," declared Aunt Jane. She was, I think, alluding to the ruins of Old Delhi, which scattered themselves casually about everywhere. I worked some of them in nevertheless with the setting sun in the background, and in the front of the picture

my host's bicycle guarded by a tattered old beggar, whose garments scarcely distinguished him from the ruins. I called it PAST AND PRESENT.

Our hostess said it was very nice ; our host, who was fidgeting to get home again, said it wanted colour ; my Aunt implored me to wash out the bicycle. They all suddenly remembered that they had not shown me the spot where Nicholson fell, nor where the Magazine was blown up, nor even the historic Ridge. "Goodness gracious," said Aunt Jane, "I forgot all about the Mutiny."

We searched for history in the dark, and finally nearly missed our train. On the way home I informed Aunt Jane of my intended flight to Agra. "I am very sorry you must go so soon," she said ; "we might have come to Delhi again."

In my diary I noted down the expediency of visiting historic cities by myself.

## CHAPTER IX.

AT one o'clock in the morning Ramzan picked me out of the train at Agra, remorsefully, with an air that plainly said it was not his fault but the fault of the Railway Company, who did not sufficiently study the convenience of the Sahib. I entirely and sleepily agreed with him as he conveyed me to an open carriage with a pair of ill-fed ponies and a vociferous coachman. Certainly the railway companies in India are determined one shall either arrive or depart or change trains in the middle of the night. The General's house when we arrived was wrapped in silence. A servant showed me my rooms, and Ramzan, with his usual care, provided me with sandwiches and the ever necessary whiskey-and-soda. Ere he took his departure, he pointed out a note on my dressing-table which I had not observed. It was in a large feminine hand-writing, and flourished all over with crests. It ran briefly : "Would you care to ride out to some manœuvres to-morrow morning ? I am starting at 7.30," and was signed *Eileen Merivale*. So Lady Merivale was a horsewoman and energetic. I sighed as I told Ramzan to awaken me early, and as usual, his manner expressed complete sympathy. I am truly fortunate in possessing such an invaluable servant.

People in India have a curious habit of existing without any

breakfast. They combine it with luncheon somewhere about noon, in a varying punctuality according to their occupations. I thoroughly appreciate a French *dejeuner*,—in France ; the roll and coffee preceding it, too, are substantial, nor is one expected to ride ten or fifteen miles, or indulge in hard labour of any sort as a rule before the second meal. Ramzan brought me at about seven o'clock a thing with the appearance of an egg, and a thin bit of toast of the sort beloved of ladies. It was a bitterly cold morning, the air keen with a freshness one does not expect to find in India, and I have never yet been accused of want of appetite. After a few gentle remonstrances Ramzan produced a second thing in shape and size much the same as the first, and more toast. Thus fortified, I adjourned to the verandah, and strolled up and down until half past eight awaiting my hostess. General Merivale, I did not doubt, had preceded us to the manœuvres. The first coolness of the morning wore off. The sun began to pour down steadily on the trim lawn with its hedge of roses and gaily-bordered paths. Not being a military man I have a deep respect for the army and everything connected with it, and I was impatient to be off. The arrival of two Arab ponies underneath the porch, when I had waited three-quarters of an hour, raised my hopes. Soon after Lady Merivale herself appeared. I have in the course of my life met a great many generals' wives, and they have all completely lived up to the character. Not so the fair Eileen ; indeed I experienced a slight shock when I first saw her. She should have been middle-aged, stately, and slightly autocratic in manner ; the little lady who advanced to meet me was none of these things. She was very girlish and *petite*, with masses of dark hair and dark eyes, and a ravishing smile that somehow reminded me of Nancy. This was awkward ; I did not wish to be reminded of Nancy at Agra. She said she hoped she wasn't late, and I said "Not at all," and we proceeded at a brisk pace up the road. I looked eagerly on every side for fortresses, palaces, Tajs, marble tombs, and such like. I beheld nothing but the usual collection of untidy roads inches deep in dust, straggling in every direction, with ditches on either side of them and glimpses of bungalows beyond. Soon even these were lost to view. We emerged on to open country, intersected with narrow and intricate gullies, with here and there some cultivation and patches of trees.

"It must be delightful," I remarked breathlessly, as we

galloped at a headlong pace over every obstacle, "to be quartered in such a historical place."

"The Taj is very nice on Sunday afternoons," replied Lady Merivale, equally breathless, "and of course it brings a lot of people from England, and that makes such a nice change. Really these show places are very useful." She pulled up. "There's a Southern army and a Northern army," she explained, "and one's attacking and one's defending, and I don't know which is which in the least, but my husband told me to come here."

"Here," was a mound beneath a clump of mango trees. I raised myself in my stirrups and scanned the horizon eagerly. Not a living thing was in sight. To our left, below us, a line of bullock carts emerged along a road in a cloud of dust and slowly disappeared down an incline. We seemed utterly alone, and yet we knew that we were in the midst of war. It was desperately exciting.

"Hush," exclaimed Lady Merivale and held up her hand. In the stillness we could clearly discern the clink of a horse's bridle. By common consent we turned and dashed in the direction from whence it came, and there sure enough, hidden in a ravine, were three horsemen. One, a mere boy, was standing on a stone looking through his glasses. One man was cleaning his carbine while his horse grazed miserably on a few tufts of yellow grass; the third, his bridle through his arm, to all intents and purpose appeared to be asleep. The boy turned startled, and looked relieved when he saw Lady Merivale.

"I was afraid you might be the enemy," he said saluting, "and that would have put me out of action. You haven't seen anything of anyone, have you?" No, we had seen nothing. We stared with awe at these martial-looking individuals, equipped with all the paraphernalia of war. We asked for enlightenment as to the general movements of the army.

"We are the right wing of the Southern Cavalry," exclaimed the boy, "and I am afraid they have forgotten us."

"That's very tiresome," said Lady Merivale, deeply sympathetic. "Can't you do something on your own account,—charge or something?"

The boy looked doubtful. "My orders were to stay here," he said. "Of course if I saw anything to charge,—" he looked speculatively at me. I clutched my riding-whip and tried to

appear ferocious. I had no wish to be charged by any of your right wings of cavalry, however small.

"Where," asked Lady Merivale, "do you think we ought to go in order to see something of the battle?"

The man cleaning the carbine stopped to stare; the man who had been asleep awakened, and busily pretended he had never been to sleep at all. The subaltern looked sad. "It's like this," he explained. "The defending party are hiding from the attacking party, and the attacking party are hiding from the defending party, and so you are not at all likely to see anything; but you might, if you rode on that way far enough, hear the guns."

The guns! We clutched at the idea as the drowning man at the proverbial straw, and rode on eagerly, nearly annihilating a party of native infantry who were concealed prone on their faces in a cornfield. "I'm so sorry," said Lady Merivale, and cantered by cheerfully. "They really oughtn't to get out of sight like that," she exclaimed. "It's not fair to the onlookers; we might be had up for manslaughter."

We stopped simultaneously. Far in the distance on our right there issued from the earth a puff of smoke, followed by a faint boom. We held our breath and listened. Another boom and another and another,—they were hard at it! On the instant I realised the savage exultation of fighting. We spurred on frantically; I wished with all my heart that I had entered the army as a profession; if peace was exciting, what must war be?

"Bother!" cried Lady Merivale.

We had galloped straight down the side of a ravine, and there seemed no visible and apparent way of getting out again. For nearly half an hour we stumbled to and fro, hot, agitated, and inclined, on the lady's part, to temper. When at last we emerged the guns had ceased. Lady Merivale declared she knew the direction of them, however, and thither we went. "They will probably be near that *bagh*," she said pointing with her whip to an enclosure with trees. It was an ideal spot, one would think, for bloodthirsty cannon. The enclosure stood on an eminence, and by reason of its belts of trees afforded cover on every side. We rode cautiously along, hoping devoutly that we should not draw upon us the revengeful fire of the enemy. Hurrah! They were there. I saw the awful-looking muzzles

of war's most formidable weapon showing between the scrub. We rode up boldly, skirting to the right. We became more bold, and charged at a canter. Now at last we should be initiated in the mysteries of attack and defence.

"We're having breakfast ; won't you have some too ?" He was a good-looking young officer and was aware of his good looks. He had evidently heard our approach, and put his head over the wall on hospitality intent.

I must confess the idea of breakfast appealed to me. It produced no effect whatever on Lady Merivale. "I thought you were fighting," she said in great disappointment.

"So we are," replied the young officer ; "we've been blazing away for two hours. If the enemy are not annihilated, they ought to be. Do have some breakfast ?"

The General's wife shook her head. "I want to see a battle," she said petulantly, like a spoilt child.

The artillery officer conversed with some one over his shoulder, and then turned to us again. "As far as our information goes, and I don't suppose it's worth much, the enemy, consisting of half a battalion of British infantry and two guns, are in full retreat. The cavalry are in pursuit. You might come up with them if you ride hard enough in that direction." He pointed across the endless sand-dunes that we had deserted on our left. Whatever else war meant, it meant hard riding and a prodigious thirst. "Of course," added the good-looking officer as we rode away, "there isn't any cavalry really ; there are a few mounted infantry men, and the rest is on paper."

How a cavalry that was only on paper could pursue, I didn't know, but Lady Merivale said it was very exciting, and we rode off again at full tilt. We rode and rode and rode. The sand flung up in our faces, and the sun scorched our backs, and the Arabs tripped perpetually in innumerable holes, and still we saw no army. There was no smoke in the distance, no sound of guns in the air, no signs of a retreat around us. I had expected at least to see a certain amount of confusion along the route, a few articles dropped here and there, perhaps a soldier or two fallen out by the way ; there was nothing in the wide world to indicate that such a thing as a soldier existed. My enthusiasm for the army began to wane. I decided that a military career had its drawbacks. It may have been all very well in the old days, when knights paraded about in armour and killed people

right and left, but nowadays it either meant hiding behind ant-hills or passing examinations ; I decided that I was not suited for either occupation. Just then we discerned three figures approaching us. We pulled up ; here at last we had come upon some of the fugitive warriors. They were three khaki-clad men, plodding their way wearily through the sand, rifles on shoulder, not always, I imagined, by a remark or two that floated towards us, using the best and choicest language. We decided to interrogate them. We asked them where the retreating enemy had got to. They stared. "Which enemy ?" they asked. We hazarded the Southern Force ; they didn't know there was a Southern Force. We mentioned something about the Northern Force ; they had never heard of it. We asked them which of the fighting units they belonged to ; they hadn't the least idea. We demanded to know in what direction there had been a battle ; they replied they didn't know there had been a battle at all. We wanted to know why they were out ; they said it was somebody's orders. We asked them where they were going to ; they brightened up and said they were going back to barracks. Catching sight of the number on their shoulders, a brilliant inspiration occurred to me to inquire where their regiment was ; at last we should hear the details for which we thirsted. "Gone 'ome long ago," was the reply ; "may be an hour and a 'alf ago, along the main road."

We let them pass on. The enemy had gone home long ago, on the main road too. Was ever anything more prosaic, more dispiriting ? I turned to Lady Merivale to cast some light on the situation. She did nothing of the sort. "I don't know where we are," she said instead, "nor where Agra is, nor how we are to get home ; and it's very hot and I'm dead beat."

And so, weary and dejected, we turned our horses' heads, and rode slowly in the direction from whence we had come. We may have proceeded a mile or so when our all but dead hopes slightly revived. Two horsemen appeared in sight galloping furiously. We set off to meet them. Something of my former excitement swept over me ; here was the real thing at last,—an officer, hot, dust-stained, and warlike, sword and every imaginable sort of article clanking all round him ; behind him an orderly, equally martial, equally dusty, equally clanking. Clearly they were on some tremendous business intent. Seeing us, they at once headed towards us. We felt important : Lady Merivale

stopped and arranged her habit ; I put my tie in order. Perhaps they were scouts, and we were desired to give them information. Those rascally soldiers doubtless had been lying ; the fighting was not all over.

The officer reined up within a yard of us and saluted profoundly. Urgent haste was written all over him. " You haven't seen a bullock-cart by any chance ? " he asked.

We racked our brains and searched the horizon. Was it possible that the fate of an army depended on a bullock-cart ? No, we had not seen one. Then suddenly Lady Merivale flashed her winning smile on him. " We saw a whole train of bullock-carts early this morning," she said, " going away in that sort of direction." She pointed to a distance of some leagues.

The officer looked pained. " I'm afraid that won't do," he said. " Fact is the General's drinks have gone astray, and we're searching the whole country for them. Very sorry to have troubled you ; thank you very much."

That was a courteous officer ; I never saw a man look such restrained bad language before. Off he went, the orderly clanking after him. That was the end of War. We rode in the same direction, to discover the General haranguing a group of officers on the manœuvres they had just executed. I don't wonder they were eager to find the drinks. Lady Merivale joined them when it was all over, and I slipped off home, or at least in a direction which I thought might lead to home. I was all the more induced to do so, in that I saw what I thought seemed a familiar figure riding ahead of me. I was right ; I caught her up quickly. She was reproachful. Of course I had been galloping about with the General's wife the whole morning ; I had not tried to look for anyone else. Ladies are so illogical ; it took me the whole of the way home to persuade her into a reasonable frame of mind. When at last I arrived at the General's hospitable domain, I was astonished to find Tammy on the steps of the porch. He looked as though he had been there for ever, but I believe as a matter of fact he had only just arrived.

" Hullo, what are you doing here ? " I asked.

" Been playing polo at Meerut," he explained, " and looked in here to see the Taj on my way back to Bombay."

I shook my head as I went indoors. The Taj has much to answer for.

*(To be continued.)*

the silent birds, the hawks and the more fierce winged intruders of the forest, with their silent voices, but there was another who went about unheeded, like a large, harmless, soft, round, saucy saucer, the more interesting, because he nothing resembled any other, and differed both in shape and size, between any two members of his family. He was a queer-looking creature, and I have never seen him since.

## SOME WOODLAND CREATURES

A hot and dazzling sun made the green shadows beneath the trees very welcome. We had spent the whole morning in this comforting, drowsy atmosphere, humming with the music of insect wings, and laden with sweet forest scents. Then wishing to avoid a long detour, we had quitted the grateful shade and launched upon a broad common, where the thick ling was a drag upon our tired feet, and bogs abounded. As we were about once more to enter the fragrant wood, a strange noise of rustling leaves and smart blows as of wood meeting wood caught our ears. The cause was invisible, and we listened attentively. Presently it was revealed. First, a white object appeared amid the bushes which fringed the wood. It was a headgear having no analogy to anything we had seen before in this day of strange head-coverings. It might have been a white turban, or an inverted saucepan trimmed with gauze. Beneath this there slowly came to view, as the blows continued, a round and healthy face, and a gigantic body in a drab calico jacket. That was all we ever did see, for the rest was buried in thick bush and bracken. We listened and watched amused, as the strange object slowly moved on, giving lusty blows with a stout blackthorn at birch branches, and holding suspended beneath an inverted umbrella to catch the droppings. Surely the thicket was not shedding stores of gold and silver ! Literally it was not, but we afterwards found that it was yielding their equivalent to our strange and solitary friend.

Suddenly he saw us, stopped his belabouring of the twigs, and hailed us with a hearty *Good-day*. We approached, glad of so promising an acquaintanceship, and had a closer view of his personality. The saucepan headgear proved to be a hat of no particular design, on which, for convenience of carriage, a white

gauze butterfly-net had been placed, its metal hoop resting on the brim, and its short handle sticking out behind like the stiffened pigtail of an ancient Jack Tar. His jacket was a garden of spiders, caterpillars, and all manner of insects. They crawled into his pockets, hid beneath his collar, and explored his neck. Of these, which would have stricken the feminine nature with terror, he took no notice, except to sort out such rarities as he desired and place them in pill-boxes, of which, together with small phials, there were dozens bulging out his pockets. The contents of the umbrella, too, he probed among, fishing out microscopic specimens that immediately became prisoners. With loving care he took off the lid of a tiny box and revealed a fairy-like thread, a quarter of an inch long, covered with white, silky hair; the thing might almost have crawled across your book without being noticed. "Know what that is?" he asked laconically. It was on my tongue to suggest that it was some kind of worm, but discretion interposed, and I confessed dense ignorance on the point. "That's *Acronycta leporina*," he explained; "and this one," he added, lifting off another lid, and exposing a similar insect atom, "is *Notodonta dromedarius*." I was glad I had admitted ignorance; it mitigated my self-abasement. The measure of my interest in the subject was, however, the string of questions I put to him, to which my companion added others of much more relevancy, for he was a deeper student of nature than I, and had more than a smattering of the subject in reserve. Like a true enthusiast, our burly friend, once convinced of our interest, released his tongue and poured into our ears the story of his discoveries during a life devoted to entomology that both charmed and enlightened us. An hour we spent thus standing to the waist in verdant undergrowth, and when at last we parted it was, on our side at least, with a sense of profit. Long after our new found friend had disappeared from sight, we heard the smacks of his stout blackthorn on the branches, and in intervals of cessation figured him rummaging among the accumulations in his umbrella for rare specimens. Even now no music of the woods is more magnetic to me than the smart crack of the entomologist's beating-stick, sending its echoes through avenue and thicket.

Our sojourn in the New Forest continued for many days after this agreeable incident, and often in secluded places we came across counterparts of our casual friend, always solitary but never

lonely in their pursuit,—true students of nature, every one of them, to whom companionship, save that of the birds and insects and trees, was unnecessary and unsought,—men of strange habits and sometimes strange appearance, it is true, but who, nevertheless, taste the sweets of existence. The hue of health was on their cheeks, the spring of youth in their tread. One, who boasted he was seventy years of age, invited us to accompany him on an expedition. For five hours we trod the forest together, over ground as uneven as a ploughed field, but at the finish he was as active as a colt, and faced a long journey home as though it were but an easy stroll. The constant habit of looking for insects on the wing had given him a keenness of eyesight that a Pawnee might have envied. He detected tiny specimens cutting the air where we saw nothing ; by their manner of flight he knew them. Although the reverse of scholarly in appearance, his tongue was ever uttering strange Latin names ; for your born entomologist eschews common names, not out of conceit, but because they are liable to vary with localities. It may be that you score a point over him by establishing his ignorance of so common a thing as the Wood Argus, but depend upon it your victory will be brief, and before long he will catch you tripping. By its Latin name he identifies the insect, and he will tell you more about the ways of *Satyrus ægeria* than ever you dreamed of. Once or twice we stumbled across naturalists of a somewhat different stamp. Unlike those mentioned they passed little by, but all was fish, to use a paradox, that came into their nets. They were dealers, who supply the specimens which bye and bye will fill cases in shop windows to catch the schoolboy's eye. Between the two classes of men there is not over much sympathy. The one works for love, the other for profit ; the one nets nothing but what he has immediate want of, the other slaughters indiscriminately, and is usually a desperately exclusive individual, keeping secret the hunting-grounds he has discovered, as he is entitled to do.

But to return to our amateur, the entomologist by choice, his enthusiasm is amazing ; it takes him out of doors early and late, and all day. Perhaps at night it is best proved, for he is then on the war-path for *Noctuae*, and uses all the wiles and strategy of a Huron. See him start out just before twilight with lantern and sugaring tin. He goes to his favourite haunts, where trees are thick, and bedaubs each bole with his sugar, which scents the air for yards

around with a pungent aroma. Then he retires until the dark hours, leaving his bait to do its work. Possibly you are benighted in the forest, and wander aimlessly in lonely places, trying to find the homeward path. The owls are calling to each other, and a thousand and one strange forest sounds startle you and cause you to peer around involuntarily, expecting some uncouth object to confront you. Presently it does. A bright light suddenly appears in the distance, and as quickly disappears, like a will-o-the-wisp. It comes again, and again it goes. Now it is on the footpath, now among the trees, nearer and nearer, until you nervously grasp your stick ready for defence. Then for the first time you see the light emerges from a lantern, and that the lantern is carried by a mild-faced human being. It is our friend of the pill-boxes, gathering in his spoil from each baited tree. Watch the progress of his light as he passes it from the bottom upwards along the sticky track he left hours ago. Drawn by the scent and proffered sweetness, a string of slugs, in Indian file, are crawling up the bark. A tiny field-mouse, clinging to the trunk, licks with dainty tongue the tempting sugar. A little higher and, sure enough, there is a Bombyx, intoxicated as any Bacchanalian, waiting to be put in safe confinement ; for there is alcohol in the sugaring mixture, and your night moth is no teetotaller. And like your human drunkard, too, he has enemies ready to take advantage of his helpless condition, for should he fall there is waiting for him at the foot of the tree a hungry toad, open-mouthed and expectant. Thus our friend goes from trunk to trunk, while the foresters sleep, gathering two, three, in some cases half a dozen, rare specimens from each, until all the boxes are full and the lantern burns dimly. That is an incident of daily occurrence in the New Forest during the summer months, though few City people know of it.

A paradise indeed to the entomologist is this hundred square miles of wood and heath, dell and hillock, bower and fragrant arcade. You will not find more picturesqueness in the whole of Europe. There is not a dull inch within its bounds, unless dulness means absence of human life. Tired people often declare their longing for perfect seclusion, and here it may be found. You may wander a whole day without seeing more humanity than is figured in a forester applying his axe to a withered trunk, or a gipsy making pegs. The air and land and sky are yours alone. No gravelled ways restrain you. At

almost any point you may dive beneath the trees and pursue your way along green carpets fringed with bushes, and backed again with stately trees. Natural avenues beckon you to unimpeded stroll, thick copses tempt you to novel exploration. The solitude in such places is fascinating, intoxicating; it is the solitude "which they call peace," stimulating the imagination, nourishing the fancies. Even in the broad daylight there is something awesome in these hidden places, that seem to stand so isolated. They are, I fear, but little known to many who claim a knowledge of the forest. They are only found by abandonment to sheer adventure. No finger-posts point them out. You trace your way to them a second time not by roads, for there are no roads, and not by structures, great or small, for there are none within the range of vision, but by nature's guides,—a curiously formed tree, a clump of herbage, the hang of a branch, a particular kind of flower.

One labyrinthian locality I have in mind that so far has defied my most painstaking efforts at penetration in precisely the direction I first discovered. A story attaches to this place, related to me by a forester, which well illustrates how easy it is to lose all sense of direction in the forest. My acquaintance was pushing his way through the wood when, coming to an opening, he saw at some distance a man and a woman. When they perceived him there was a vigorous waving of handkerchiefs, and the woman ran towards him. For hours these two had been wandering aimlessly about, not knowing which way to take. The possibility of having to spend the night in the dark avenues amid creeping things had well nigh driven the lady into hysterics. Her husband, she declared, had vouched his knowledge when they set out of every inch of that part of the forest. Now that release had come the good woman inflicted upon him a loquacious lecture which had not ceased when, some time later, they were led into the right path and directed to their haven. Other incidents I have heard related which ended much less satisfactorily, the wanderers having been compelled to pass the night in the forest with results that were anything but beneficial to the nervous system. But this may be avoided with a little foresight, and the aid of a pocket-compass and a map.

There has recently passed away, alas, a figure of the forest who was as true a hermit as authentic history can produce. This was Brusher Mills, the snake-catcher, a strange individual who

for thirty years dwelt alone in an old cabin beneath a holly tree and pursued his unique calling. In his early days he supplied the Zoological Gardens with snakes, but later on this source of profit failed, and he devoted himself to extracting the oil from his wriggling prey and found a ready market for it. It is said to be an antidote to snake-bite. Brusher was a quaint and picturesque figure, with traces upon his bearded (and, I am bound to confess, dirty) face of a former intelligence. He wore an old slouch hat, a patched and faded coat that reached to his knees, and trousers that rested in folds on immense boots rendered of iron hardness by alternate struggling through bogs and drying in the sun. A piece of sacking was wound round his shoulders, for he slept often beneath the stars. Hanging by a piece of rope at his side was a pair of long tongs with which to grasp his captives, and an old and rusty tin can in which to place them; and he invariably carried a stick about four feet long and forked at the end, which he used to pin down the crawling quarry that came across his path.

Many times I have seen Brusher in the depths of the forest, or visited him in his cabin. It was a primitive place, this forest habitation, standing beneath thick foliage on the edge of a wide and boggy heath, with thick woods around. The framework consisted of a number of poles placed in a circle and meeting at the top, forming a cone. Over this turf was placed, a low opening about three feet high serving for an entrance. Inside was an accumulation of filth and rubbish that in more populated places would have quickly brought down upon him the sanitary inspector. A heap of rags served for a bed. Into this burrow Brusher dragged himself through winter and summer, covering the entrance with a large piece of turf. In rainy seasons I have seen the place saturated, and yet its hardy occupier rarely complained of any ailment save occasional attacks of rheumatism. The way to the hut was tortuous, but be the night black as pitch Brusher could find it without a fault. Almost the last time I saw him was on the outskirts of Lyndhurst. It was a very dark night, and he had just emerged from a little wayside inn, where it was his wont to call for a mixture of whisky and rum, his favourite beverage. Leaving the high road he dipped into the forest along a path which was invisible to me, but which he struck by instinct. He vanished like a phantom, muttering to himself, as was habitual with him. But for some minutes I

could hear coming through the darkness the clanking of his pincers against the tin can and the snapping of twigs as he pushed them aside. Gradually these sounds grew fainter and fainter, until they ceased entirely, and imagination pictured the bent and ragged figure pressing its way along through the gloom to the dismal holly tree down by the bog. Some two years ago Brusher was ejected from his dwelling by the Court of Verderers. He had abided there so long that the time was near when he would have acquired a vested right in this little plot and could not have been interfered with. So the noisome hut was demolished, and he went to live on the outskirts of Brockenhurst under more sanitary conditions. But the new life did not agree with him ; he pined for the old loneliness, and was found dead one day. Recently I visited the spot which had known him so long. Scarcely a trace remained of his primitive domicile. Friendly grass had overgrown the site and even hidden the blackened patch where he used to light his fire for cooking purposes. A tiny bit of rag was all that could be seen of his scanty bedding ; doubtless that has now rotted away beneath the rains and dews which sometimes drench that pretty secluded spot.

But although the old snake-catcher is no longer there to astonish, and, as I have reason to know, sometimes alarm by his grim apparition in solitary places, the animals which provided him with a means of humble livelihood still flourish and abound. It is, however, only by leaving the beaten path and seeking the less known localities that either grass-snakes or adders are to be found in any number. The former are harmless creatures enough, that you may handle with impunity, but a knock on the head is desirable before attempting close acquaintance with the latter. They are pretty creatures, these snakes and vipers, partial to certain moist places, and particularly to gravelly and chalky paths alongside streams. In such situations I have often seen them basking in the sun. On the slightest indication of danger they seek cover, and hence are never found far away from their holes. While the foresters, even to the youngest, regard them without concern, they may still be worked upon pretty effectively by snake-stories. During one of my most recent visits half the forest was thrown into a state of perturbation by an incident that ended rather humorously. Some visitors had taken with them a pet boa-constrictor about eight feet long. One day the creature escaped and glided into the shrubs.

Almost immediately the most alarming rumours gained currency. Traces of the animal were said to have been seen at places very wide apart within a few hours ; sheep were reported crushed to death in this locality, fowls were lying dead in that. The more timid inhabitants began to fear going too far abroad, lest they should meet the dread serpent, forgetful that it was but a minute speck in those great ranges of woodland. At length, after several days' suspense, the creature was found by a keeper, a sorry wreck, more dead than alive, within a stone's throw of where it had disappeared.

Apart from adders the forest contains no animal life that need cause nervousness. Stories are current of the pole-cat having been seen, but I fancy the genuine specimens of that savage creature have long since disappeared. There are, however, roaming at large cats of the domestic species, which, born in the forest, and driven to obtain their food by hunting, are quite as wild and unfriendly. They are rarely seen, but when met with are best given a wide berth, for if driven into a corner they are ferocious fighters, and their daring is proverbial. A keeper, with whom I have frequently stayed in delightful rusticity, once told me of a very fine specimen which, darting on to the path before him, faced and would have attacked a large retriever dog that accompanied him had it not been routed with the biting lash of a whip. The covers on his kitchen-chairs were mostly the skins of wild cats which he had shot as coming within the category of destructive vermin. The otter, badger, and fox are more or less plentiful, and provide excellent sport with hounds. Stoats, weasels, and squirrels, I have also often seen. But the lord of the forest is the deer, not here a tame, half-domesticated creature that will take food from the hand, but wild and shy, giving to huntsmen and hounds many an arduous and futile run. You come across them in small herds quite unexpectedly, sometimes peeping inquisitively at you over the long bracken in the thick inclosures, sometimes lying up hiding in the undergrowth ; but depend upon it your acquaintance is bound to be short ; the slender limbs carry their burdens over fallen trees and lofty hedges with graceful bounds that defy imitation. There are noble warriors among the bucks, that will fight like furies for their tribes. Last summer two were found stone-dead with broken necks, their antlers intricably interlocked.

I have viewed the forest under many aspects : in brilliant sunshine and pouring rain ; when the heat has burned the grass brown, and the thin mist has spread like a sea over heath and meadow ; in time of drought when the leaves have hung crisp and lifeless, and the beds of the brooks were sunken paths ; and in time of flood when great patches of land have become lakes studded with small islands. Under all these conditions there has been a wonderful fascination in the landscape, with its limitless variety to the eye attuned to nature's charms. The gaze may range over the billowy tops of trees to the dim and blue horizon, or linger on the dainty beauty of a tiny nook sheltered by low bushes and moistened by a singing thread of water. I have in my mind just such a spot, lying in a hollow, shut in by pines and thorns, and in area no bigger than an ordinary room. A rivulet gurgles through it, coming from under the dark bushes, smoothly coursing over a little slope, laying low in long green strings the water-grasses, and ending in a smooth, unruffled pool, on the surface of which insects race and dance—long-legged *Gerris lacustris*, metallic-backed *Gyrinus natator*, engaging in a headlong ballet of dizzy evolutions among water-lilies. Lepidoptera seek out this sunny retreat and suck the edging plants ; the dragon-fly, with striped and brilliant coat, darts from under the bushes and away again on lace-work wings ; the dainty *Demoiselle*, dipped in a wonderful pigment of burnished colour, neither green, nor blue, nor purple, suns itself upon the reeds. In the mid-day brilliance the little Arcadia is brisk with fairy life, sweet with the woodland scents, tuneful with the hum of wings, the song of birds, and the rippling of cool waters. There are many such places in the forest. Is there any wonder then that he who has drunk deep of its lovely solitudes turns to it always with affection ? Our friend with the beating stick dreams of it.

FREDERICK PAYLER

## ALL SOULS' DAY

THE saint's breviary, we were told at the church, was kept at the *presbytère*, but M. le Curé would be delighted to show it to us. So we went thither, and passing under an archway in the wall, and through a tiny garden-corner bright with flowers, found that M. le Curé was out but was expected back at any moment, and were requested to wait in the parlour. This we were glad enough to do, for Breton roads in August are hot and dusty, and we were somewhat weary with our long walk. The parlour was rather dark and very cool ; it had straight-backed chairs arranged with extreme precision along the walls, a round table in the middle, and was hung with a few sacred prints. At either end of the mantelpiece, under a glass shade, was a little crucifix of extremely uncouth workmanship.

The Curé not appearing, I was wandering aimlessly round the room, when my eyes fell upon the book which we had come to see, in a roughly-made case on a table in the window.

"Here's our quarry," I exclaimed. "I wonder why the housekeeper did not tell us that it was in here." A card, neatly written, gave us information as to the date and authenticity of the breviary, but we did not like to take the volume from its case to examine it more closely until its guardian should arrive.

"Our host has one or two good bindings up there," remarked my friend, his eyes travelling to a little bookcase upon the wall. "Moreover, if that's not an English seventeenth century tooling I'll eat my hat." Moved by the sacred enthusiasm of the bibliophile he stretched up a hand and plucked the book forth. "Look," he said.

It was a Dutch-printed Latin copy of THE IMITATION OF CHRIST, of the year 1620, and though I know little of bindings I saw the significance of the faded inscription on the fly-leaf. *Mildmay Fane*, presumably the owner's name, was written high up in the right-hand corner, and then lower down, and evidently at a

different time, *Hunc librum ad L.R.E. de V. dedit, anno MDCXXXI in memoriam misericordiae non obliviscendae*, and lower down again, *Ora pro anima N.C.*

"By Jove!" I said, "given by an Englishman to a Frenchman in 1631. I wonder what it is doing here, and who N.C. was."

But as I spoke the door opened, and the Curé hurried in, full of gentle apologies for keeping us waiting. He was the most beautiful and fragile old man that it has ever been my lot to meet, and he had spoken but a few words before we knew that he had a mind to match his person. In a minute or so the saint's breviary was out of its case, and we were examining it with attention, while the priest discoursed of it in a manner that showed he had no small knowledge of medieval manuscripts. It seemed to be all that was claimed for it, while its guardian's pride in it, and his manifest pleasure in showing it to foreigners (of whom one at least was a competent critic) were delightful to witness. But the discussion became at the end too technical for my attention, which wandered off to the Englishman's *à Kempis*, lying close to my hand, and I turned over its yellow pages musingly until I realised that the examination of the breviary was finished.

"You are very amiable, Messieurs, to have come so far to see this relic," remarked the Curé, pulling his spectacles lower on his nose, and looking at us over them, "Especially as you are, I suppose, Protestants?" he added.

My friend and I disclaimed the title so hastily as to cause the old priest some amusement. "Well, well," he said indulgently, "at any rate you cannot have known the same devotion for the blessed Hugues which has brought here most of those who come to see his book."

"But there is one saint and his book," I observed, rather sententiously, I fear, "for whom we all have a like devotion, whatever our country, creed, or age." And holding out the IMITATION, I asked him if he would be good enough to satisfy our curiosity about it.

"Ah, there you have a great treasure of mine," he said smiling. "It has been as an heirloom in my family. Messieurs, a bargain,—if you will stay and take *déjeuner* with an old man who has not often the pleasure of meeting an Englishman, I will tell you the story of your countryman and the inscription in his *à Kempis*."

We were at heart only too pleased to stay, and though I fancied the housekeeper was not so pleased, and that I heard vociferations from the kitchen, we had an excellent little *déjeuner*. The old priest was so charming a mixture of shrewdness and naïveté, of humility and knowledge of the world, that his conversation was wholly delightful. After the meal we went into the little walled garden, and sat under a pear-tree, where our coffee was brought out to us, after we had assisted the Curé to hunt a fowl out of his bed of seedling wallflowers. "I think the blessed St. Francis must have omitted to preach to the *basse-cour*," he said ruefully, as we came back. "For my part I often feel most unchristian to my sister the hen."

When we had finished our coffee he drew the book out of the pocket of his cassock. "I must warn you that this is a story for the fireside in winter, and not for all this,"—he waved his hand to include the little green garden, the warm and fragrant air, the stocks and wallflowers, flagging a trifle in the sun, and the drowsy cooing from an unseen dovecot—"but it does not matter.

"This book, then, was given to a member of my family by its owner, Mr. Fane, an English gentleman of great gifts both of mind and body, a very noble person,—*une âme d'élite*, as we say—all whose qualities were like to suffer ruin through a disaster which befell him in early manhood. This calamity, brought about through no fault of his own, plunged him into circumstances which were leading him in a direction very different from the path wherein he had early set his steps, and to which, by the mercy of God, he afterwards returned, through what strange agency you shall hear.

"About the end of the year 1629 Mr. Fane, then a little more than thirty years of age, was visiting Paris on his return from a foreign tour, when he had the misfortune to incur the enmity of a certain Chevalier de Crussol, a man of notoriously evil life. They had met but a few times when a violent quarrel took place between them, in which Mr. Fane, so far as human judgment goes, had undoubtedly right upon his side. As a result of this disagreement Mr. Fane held himself in readiness to receive a challenge from the Chevalier. The expected cartel was never sent, but M. de Crussol took other means to avenge himself. As the Englishman was returning alone at night from a ball he was set upon by the Chevalier and several of his lackeys, who, after a brief struggle, left him for dead in the street.

"The door at which Mr. Fane fell, with half a score of wounds upon him, was that of the house which Carl' Egidio, the Grand Duke of P——, was making his residence during a private sojourn in Paris. By the Grand Duke's domestics, then, Mr. Fane was found in the early morning, and, being carried within, was there cared for during the space of two or three months. For many weeks of this time his life was despaired of, and he was unable to give any account of himself. However, the Grand Duke, seeing that he had to do with a gentleman of condition, whose appearance moreover had from the first attracted him, spared nothing of his hospitality and care. It so chanced that Mr. Fane had despatched his servant to England before he entered Paris, and that none of his acquaintance in the city was aware of his presence there, nor, in consequence, of the disaster which had befallen him. There was no person therefore to make enquiries concerning him, nor to reveal his identity, which he, lying for weeks unconscious, was equally unable to disclose. The result of this general ignorance, when he returned at last to sense and life, was not long in reaching Mr. Fane's ears. His friends, in England and abroad alike, believed him dead, slipt out of life by some such door, perhaps, as that through which he had so nearly passed; and in England the lady whom he had hopes of winning was married to another.

"Mr. Fane now fell into a great despair and blackness of soul. So much did he feel the faithlessness of her whom a few short months' silence could so alienate, that the idea of a return to England was abhorrent to him. Nor to his disordered mind did it appear to signify that he had, after all, escaped the sword of his enemy. He persuaded himself that his friends had forgotten him, and when the Grand Duke, who had conceived a violent attachment for his company, implored him to return with him to Italy, Mr. Fane consented with a sort of indifferent pleasure, saying bitterly that a dead man had no right to come to life again. He accordingly left Paris in the train of the Grand Duke.

"Dead he was, in another and a more real sense,—not, indeed, so dead as the majority of those with whom he now consorted, but with scarcely a trace remaining of that interior life which had once been to him the only existence worthy of the name. Carl' Egidio, a prince of cultured vices, called him saint and recluse, and strove to draw him more intimately into the circle of his own

pleasures, but that Mr. Fane was of a different fashion from most of the grand-ducal associates did not, after all, confer on him any real title to those names. Yet the pleasures of the court held little savour for him, and sometimes, on his knees with the others at the sumptuous masses which they all attended (for Carl' Egidio was extremely orthodox) faint and bitter memories of better days broke into his soul. And the shy little Grand Duchess Maria Maddalena, the poor little bride who regretted her convent, talked to him at times on themes which had once been more than a name to him, and which these conversations, he could not but know it, were almost all she had to prevent their becoming names to her also. It was for her sake that he suffered the mention of things once dear, now inexpressibly alien to him, and perhaps a little for her sake too that he kept himself clean of the grosser forms of vice.

"But these could not fail, in time, to close upon him. The ladies of the court were none too difficult, and he had every gift to commend him to a woman. Before the winter was come Donna Flavia Ranuccini, a married kinswoman of the Duke's, had lured him along a perilous path of intimacy to a disastrous end. He did not love her, but she had wrested from him as much as he had in those days to give to any woman ; and to an intimacy of such a kind, at that time and in such surroundings, there could be but one conclusion. Mr. Fane was only fulfilling, alas, what his world expected of a gentleman of fashion, when after a year's residence in P—— he made preparations for becoming Donna Flavia's acknowledged lover.

"It was ten o'clock on the second evening in November. October, so lately fled, had carried off few leaves from the trees in the Duke's beautiful gardens, into which Mr. Fane sat looking from a window-seat of his apartment in the palace. A half-moon, sometimes obscured by light fingers of cloud, shone on the statues among the trees, the dryads and fauns, and the Silenus in the middle of the nearest plot, and through the open casement came now and then the shiver of the leaves. Half lying on the deep seat the Englishman propped his chin on his hand and looked out. Something in the tall cypresses reminded him of a graveyard, and the white and silent statues of monuments,—or ghosts. Ghosts might well walk in the palace gardens, the ghosts of those who had played out their lives there, on the lawns and terraces in summer, or in winter in the apart-

ments on the other side, now alight with revelry from which he had withdrawn himself,—for what? Donna Flavia's letter was in his pocket,—in a few years she too would be a ghost of the garden,—and he? But he was already dead, and had a right to walk already. And then he remembered,—what indeed he had forgotten merely for an hour or two—that it was All Souls' Day.

"Even as he remembered it the heavy window-curtain swayed slowly out from its place, as a curtain by an open window will do either with a gust of wind or with the opening of a door. But the wind was nothing save an occasional light shudder in the garden, and the door at the end of the long dimly-lit room had in truth been opened, for, turning his head on the instant, Mr. Fane heard it softly closed. Looking down the room he discerned the figure of a man coming towards him, and with some vexation wondered who entered unannounced at such an hour. But as the intruder came nearer he started from the window with his hand on his sword. It was the Chevalier de Crussol.

"He was dressed, as always, with some elaboration, in rich and pale satins, with his dark lovelocks falling over Venice point, a jewel in his ear, and a medal, or an order, on a broad ribbon about his neck. Bareheaded, with his left hand, sparkling with rings, resting lightly on his sword-hilt, he came slowly down the room towards his foe, and his short velvet cloak swung from his shoulder as he walked. But when he was within a couple of yards from Mr. Fane he suddenly halted, and stood looking at him with an air of extraordinary seriousness. Mr. Fane's last recollection of him was very different, and of the wild passions and vindictive triumph which had then been imprinted on his countenance there was now no trace, nor indeed of any other emotion. All expression seemed to have been wiped, as with a sponge, from his face, which yet bore everything by which a man may recognise one whom he has loved, or hated.

"'What do you want here?' asked Mr. Fane, finding his voice at last under his amazement.

"The Chevalier made no answer, nor moved, but continued to look at him with eyes of a strange flickering greyness.

"'Speak, in God's name!' cried Fane. 'What are you here for? Are you mad?' And indeed there could scarcely be any other explanation of his audacity.

"'Do you not know,' said the Chevalier in a low tone, speaking French, 'that it is the *jour des Morts*?'

"The sound of his voice carried Mr. Fane back in an instant to the dark street in Paris, the torches, and the swords. 'I know it,' he returned in the same tongue. 'And you have, perhaps, a fancy to join them?'

"His visitor paid no heed, but continuing to look at Mr. Fane with the same indescribable calm, said gravely: 'I am come to warn you of peril.'

"Another assassination!" exclaimed the Englishman bitterly.

"Rather self-murder," replied the Chevalier, with not the faintest sign of blenching at the taunt.

"His composure, but still more the reference to his own private affairs, was too much for Mr. Fane. 'Now, by Him that made me,' he began, springing towards him. The Chevalier retreated a step and put a hand to stay him; but Mr. Fane never touched him. In after years, I believe, he could never satisfactorily account for the reason of sudden enlightenment; the figure, even in the subdued light, was so distinct, so real, with all the visible attributes of breathing humanity about it. But on his closer advance he knew.

"He recoiled very slowly, crossing himself almost mechanically, and the dead murderer and his living victim stood looking at each other across the riven veil. There was no fear in Mr. Fane's heart, but awe certainly, and a great wonder. Why had the creature come,—to ask his forgiveness? No, for as the thought shot through his mind (he forgetting for the moment what had already passed between them) the apparition answered it. 'I am beyond the reach of human pardon, Mr. Fane; but I entreat you, by Him you named just now, not to do this thing.'

"The strange dead eyes were full upon him, passionless and yet compelling. Fane was shaken, but to be brought to book by one whom he could not but know to be infinitely worse than himself touched his sore and haughty soul too sharply. The human passion swept away with it the sense (which one might have supposed overpowering) that he was speaking to no living man. 'Enough,' he said shortly, and added, 'you find yourself, surely, on a strange errand, M. le Chevalier.'

"The messenger," returned his visitor almost inaudibly, "is not accounted of,—and you will not listen, nor stay your steps before it be too late?"

"Mr. Fane, without replying in words, made a gesture of negation, and a clock in some recess of the room struck the

quarter. It was the hour at which he had ordered his chair to await him. The figure of his visitant stood between him and the door through which he must pass to gain the courtyard, not that door at the end of the room by which the Chevalier had entered, but a *porte de dégagement* on the left of the window. He looked towards it impatiently, in a way that would have been plain to an earthly guest.

"Mr. Fane," said the figure, holding up his hand, while for the first time a trace of emotion thrilled in his low and even voice, "Mr. Fane, I will call another to stay you. You shall not dare to pass that door."

"And with that he turned on his heel, as naturally as a living man might turn. On the wall, not far from the door, there hung a beautifully carved crucifix of ivory and silver, Carl Egidio's gift to his favourite. Before Fane had time to interpose the spirit of his enemy had it in his left hand, and in his right, the light glinting dully upon it, a little dagger which he drew from his breast. Now he was at the door, and put the crucifix high up against the central panel, and, holding it thus, drove the stiletto through the ring deep into the wood. Then he half turned, looked round at Fane, and—was gone.

Mildmay Fane wiped the sweat from his forehead. The room was empty, just as it had been a few minutes ago, save for the white Christ hanging over against him, nailed to the oak by an assassin's dagger. The sense of having dealt with the unseen was a thousandfold more potent now than when he had spoken with the phantom. Great God! what did it mean?—and yet he knew.

"Then he told himself that he was dreaming. But the crucifix upon the door,—was it real, or was it not? He went slowly up to it, not daring to touch it. Yes, surely, it was as real as sight could prove it, and the little dagger, with the ruby in the hilt,—the dagger which he knew, which had once had his own blood upon it—was fast in the panel. He put out his hand and drew it back again. 'I will leave the Christ there until I return, and if it be there still I shall know that I am not dreaming. I am not afraid of ghosts,' he thought to himself. But he stood for a moment looking fixedly at the Figure so strangely suspended in his path.

"The clock struck the half-hour, and he turned away to get his cloak from the window-seat. When he had his back to the

barred door he thought with a smile of his visitor's defiance, 'You shall not dare to pass that door !' He put the cloak about him and walked steadily to it again.

"Ah, God ! how the Christ looked at him, under the thorn-crowned brows ! And as Mildmay Fane stood with his hand upon the handle, in the act to turn the latch, he suddenly drew back trembling. Not knowing why, but as one dreaming, he put out his hand instead to the Chevalier's poignard. His fingers encountered nothing but the panel of the door, but the crucifix, as though its support were removed, slipped instantly down the polished oak. He caught it as it fell, and, as his fingers closed on the symbol which an incredible act of divine mercy had placed to bar his way, the temptation dropped dead in his breast like a shot bird, and with an overmastering sense of awe and gratitude he sank upon his knees with the crucifix pressed to his lips.

"A week later he had left P—— for ever. Of all the Grand Duke's gifts he carried away with him but one, and left nothing behind of permanency but his memory to the little Grand Duchess.

"So you see, my children," said the old priest, smiling upon us, "that even if on All Souls' Day you met the ghost of one who had been your enemy,—though I hope that neither of you has such a thing—you would not need to think he came to do you harm."

"But, Father," said I, infinitely touched by the sweetness of his tone, "why should it have been his enemy that was sent to Mr. Fane ? Do you think it was in expiation of his crime ?"

The priest shook his head. "That is not for me to say. Let us hope so. I think that when Mr. Fane prayed before the altar for the repose of the Chevalier's soul, as he did to the end of his life,—as he here asked his friend to pray—" he lifted the book—"that must have been a hope with him . . . when he prayed also (as I am sure he did) that he himself, to whom so great a mercy had been given,—*misericordia non obliviscenda*—might not be found wanting in the day of the Lord."

D. K. BROSTER

## KING PETER'S CAPITAL

WE were a polyglot company on board the little Danube steamer that plies between the Hungarian towns of Orsova on the Roumanian frontier and Semlin just above Belgrade. The morning was bitterly cold and there was grumbling about the weather in many shades of Magyar, German, Roumanian, and Servian, while a grand but unspeakable Turk from the little Turkish island of Ada-Kaleh, which lies mid-stream in the Danube just below Orsova, shivered silently in the English great coat which kept queer company with his red fez. A wandering English-woman, who, to be Irish, was a Scot, and two Americans, guileless of any lingo but Yankee, were thawing themselves with hot coffee in the little saloon, as the MARGIT started on her voyage upstream. On the lower deck, at the steerage end, groups of peasants settled themselves with their bundles and their babies, the men, huddled in felt or sheepskin coats, continuing slumbers interrupted by an early start, the women, in skirts that made up in number what they lacked in length, soothing wailing babies with scraps of folk-song, Magyar, Roumanian, or Servian. To these shivering steerage folk the traces of Trajan's road, cut in the rocky sides of the defile of Kasan, were less interesting than the cheery blaze of a gipsy fire that a ragged but merry group had lighted in one of the caverns past which the steamer glided on its way through the grandest bit of scenery on the Danube.

We halted at villages on the Servian shore to take on board clusters of stalwart peasants in picturesque but insanitary costume, since the complicated lengths of motley rags wound round their feet and up the legs to the knee are worn day and night for weeks at a stretch. These added themselves to the many-coloured and not too fragrant bouquet of Hungarians and Roumanians, gipsies and Jews, who, as the sun rose, swarmed on to the upper deck, to eat strange foods with stilettos and

cheer themselves with wine that went direct from the bottle to the head.

A Servian priest and a Servian matron joined the saloon passengers at Milanovac, the priest girt about the loins with a red sash above a long black *soutane*, the lady, who might otherwise have passed for a decent housewife of Brixton or Clapham, wearing instead of a bonnet a red Turkish fez laid flat on her scalp and bound round with a wide plait of hair,—her own or another's. A sleeveless Zouave coat of dark red velvet kept in countenance headgear which we saw later worn by many Servian women of the lower middle class.

We had stopped to take on coal at Bazias, had lunched leisurely, with a dessert of Muscatel grapes bought at a few nickels a pound from peasants on one of the piers we passed ; we had glided past islands and ruins of fortresses, Turkish and Servian, and had watched the sun set exquisitely on the spurs of the Carpathians, turning the grey waters of the Danube to blood ; and at last in the moonlit night we sighted the capital of King Peter's kingdom, marked by its flashing crown of electric lights.

We halted there, and many of our passengers went ashore, but, having no passport, I preferred to make the fifteen minutes' extra voyage to the Hungarian town of Semlin, stop the night there, and next day visit Belgrade by local steamer, though I was assured by the captain of the steamer that no passport was necessary, and that even a woman travelling alone would have nothing to fear in the capital which most British know only as the scene of the horrible royal tragedy of some years ago. "*Der König Peter ist ein ganz guter solider Mann* (King Peter is quite a good and worthy man)" was the opinion of a Servian with whom I talked, as in the moonlight we glided past the garden-girt royal villa just above Belgrade where King Alexander's fatal love affair began. As for the much-advertised escapades of the Crown Prince, my informant, with perhaps more charity than knowledge, described these as the youthful follies of a prince who had his crop of wild oats to sow.

A quarter-of-an-hour's river-voyage on the sunny Sunday morning seemed simple enough, and I had no misgivings about it as I sauntered through the gay market-place, picking my way between country carts, and crowds of peasant folk, among poultry tied by the feet in shrilly protesting bundles,

fruit and vegetables, and piles of the red pepper that are a feature of every Hungarian market. But arrived at the little river-side pier, I was to learn that for the foreigner without a passport the voyage to Belgrade was no such easy matter. My best German procured me a ticket, but that, and even a permit from the Hungarian State railway, describing me as "*Hirlapiro angol* (English journalist)," had no effect on the gruff Servian soldier who guarded the passage up the little pier to a steamer that fumed and fretted at one end as I did at the other. I was referred back to the waiting-room, where a crowd of would-be passengers waited *en queue* near a sort of box-office until a provokingly deliberate official had spelled out their names from a big ledger and handed out their permits duly *viséed*.

Long before my turn came, the little steamer had gone puffing on its way down stream, and annoyance gave force to the German in which, backed by my railway permit, I explained that I had not known a passport would be needed for a few hours' visit to Belgrade. It was useless. Illiterate officialism demanded that I should betake myself to the police and get the customary certificate, so, beginning to feel as if I were a Russian refugee, I made my way back to the town and, after a round of calls on leisurely officials at the magistrature, lighted on a courteous titled somebody who at once, with the politeness characteristic of Hungarians, vouched for my respectability,—or at least signed my certificate. When at last, tired but triumphant, I was allowed to board the steamer, I resolved never again to travel in far lands without a passport.

The steamer deposited its cargo of Sunday passengers at the foot of a steep flight of stairs leading up to the Kalemegdan, the pretty little park where on fine afternoons all Belgrade walks and drives, listening to a military band and refreshing itself with ices and coffee at the big restaurants near the entrance. But as it was still early, I shared the lovely view across the river Save only with a silent company of Servian poets in bronze who inhabit the little grove near the promenade known as the Fakir-Bair or Slope of Dreaming.

The streets near the centre of the town were lively enough as I passed through them a little later, and the pretty market-place, roofed delightfully with trees, was ablaze with the peasants' costumes and alive with bartering in many tongues. The purple and green of the grapes, the orange and gold of melons and gherkins, the flaming red of the inevitable pepper, and the vivid

colours of the peasants' dresses made splashes of brilliance on the rough cobbles beneath the screen of green leaves.

The churches were emptying, the cafés filling. Passing the Metropolitan church, where a little crowd had gathered, I had a glimpse of Servian royalty in the person of a pale, dark-haired girl, quietly dressed in grey clothes cut in English style, and attended by one lady-in-waiting. As she passed close to me on her way to her carriage, it was easy to discern in the sad dark eyes some shadow of the trouble that hovers over King Peter's family and his throne. The daughter of a Montenegrin princess, Princess Helen of Servia has a distinct likeness to her aunt, the Queen of Italy.

In the heart of the town I found many of the shops open and the streets filled with Belgradians in Sunday garb, comely, dark-eyed women whose costumes and coiffures suggested a careful study of English as well of Viennese fashions, and tall handsome officers in smart uniforms of dark red and blue, many of them hussars from their quarters on the outskirts of the city. Electric tramcars were buzzing to and fro in the long street that connects the Kalemegdan with the new Konak, or palace, a handsome white building standing in well-kept gardens close to the street. A military band was playing in the grounds before the palace, and outside the railings a crowd had gathered to listen to the music. The sunshine, the music, the careless gaiety of the crowd made the tragedy of three years ago, enacted near this very spot, seem only an evil dream.

The passing of a merry bridal party gave the scene its finishing touch of gaiety. Evidently the first Sunday of October is a favourite day for marrying with the Belgradians, for in the course of my day there, I met several bridal processions making the circuit of the town in carriages, the bride wearing with her white dress and veil a wreath of silver tinsel leaves instead of orange flowers, the bridegroom in the orthodox frock coat and with the air common to bridegrooms of a lamb being led to the slaughter, the younger guests, perched on the box seats, flourishing wands wound round with coloured paper above horses whose manes were knotted with white or coloured kerchiefs.

It is an easy walk from one end to the other of King Peter's capital. The Skuptschine or House of Representatives, the New and the Old Palaces, the University, the National Library, and the chief Government offices are all within easy reach of each

other in the neighbourhood of the central square where the National Theatre and the General Post Office look down on a bronze horseman,—Prince Michael Obrenovitch, whose assassination on a June day in 1868 was one of many warnings to Servian rulers.

Servian is apparently the only language spoken and understood by the majority of Belgradians, and it needed both ingenuity and patience to negotiate for picture postcards and for a lunch accompanied by some of the good though rough wine of the country. Baedeker declares that Austrian money is taken reluctantly in Belgrade, but I noted no sign of such delicacy on the part of shopkeepers and waiters, possibly because they gauged my ignorance of the number of nickel *paras* and *piastres* that go to the *dinar*, or *franc*, or the Austrian *krone*. The use in Servian inscriptions of Russian characters adds yet another complication to the lot of the stranger in Belgrade. But Servians, like most nations, are not slow to understand the universal language of smiles and signs, and these served me when I lost my way in the tangle of steep streets leading to the river-side quay. A charming dark-eyed baby, one of a family who directed me from their house-door, ran after me to drop a kiss on the back of my hand and prove that the *küss die Hand* of the polite Austrian and Hungarian has not become a dead letter in Servia.

My faithful Baedeker reminded me that I had neglected to visit the old Turkish fort and the former Turkish town, now the Jewish quarter; also that a short tramcar ride would take me to Topschider, the King's country seat with the park where Prince Michael Obrenovitch was murdered. But for a lone woman, without an escort, and without even a bowing acquaintance with the Servian language, it seemed the part of wisdom to leave Belgrade while there was yet daylight.

The Servian soldier seemed still to eye me with suspicion as I passed on to Hungarian soil; but mental luggage is duty free and even he could not challenge my wallet of impressions of King Peter's gay little capital,—a city of sunlit streets, of handsome men and comely women, of a market-place brilliant with colour, and palaces girt with gardens and military music—with only the shadow in the dark eyes of a pale young princess to hint that all is not sunshine in the country of King Peter.

A. L. S.

## A MEETING OF THE MIRROR CLUB

HENRY MACKENZIE presided as usual, and the members of the Mirror Club were seated with him at table smoking over their wine. It was a dismal winter's night late in the year 1778, and few people had ventured to brave the elements, since the narrow wynds of the Scottish capital were blocked with drifts of snow and the wind whistled shrilly round the corners of the streets. But if it was cheerless out-of-doors, the tavern bespoke comfort. Lucky Dunbar, anxious to retain the patronage of his distinguished guests, who to his annoyance occasionally resorted to Somers's opposite the guardhouse in the High Street, had specially reserved for their use his most spacious public room, and had before hastening to attend to his other customers piled the logs high on the blazing hearth.

The members were in the best of spirits ; it was a select gathering, although the attendance was perhaps rather smaller than usual owing to the wretchedness of the weather. Besides the President there were Alexander Abercromby, Robert Cullen, and Macleod Bannatyne, all of them advocates by profession, and rapidly rising at the bar. They had important business to transact, which for the moment was deferred until the arrival of another member, William Craig, who happened to be late. In the meantime the talk turned on politics and Mackenzie was bewailing the iniquities of taxation.

"For instance, gentlemen, this is excellent claret that our host has provided for us, but I doubt whether we shall be drinking it three months hence," he said, poising his glass between finger and thumb and regarding it critically with the eye of a connoisseur. "Poor Home told me at the Poker Club the other day that he could not afford his favourite beverage since the Government had imposed a heavy duty on it. He intends to express his indignation in verse, and I hope that a public protest

by the author of *DOUGLAS* will bring the Southrons to their senses, and lead to the repeal of this disgraceful enactment."

The others readily acquiesced, and Bannatyne added :

"I have heard that David Hume, who, as you will all remember, much preferred port, used to ridicule Home on this very subject, and actually stated in his will that it was the only cause of contention between them in temporal matters."

"That is so," returned Mackenzie, "for I have read the will myself, and a curious document it is."

"But was there ever a more warlike individual than honest John?" Bannatyne went on. "He is now fifty-six, but his reverence might be half that age by the way he carries on. Since he obtained that commission in the South Fencibles, Buccleuch's regiment, this year, he has had several falls from his horse, the last rather serious I'm told. From the memorable days of the Forty-Five when he and Dr. Carlyle of Inveresk defied the Pretender and gave such valuable assistance to Cope and his army at Dunbar by informing them of the Highlanders' whereabouts, he has been longing to kill somebody. His friends are trying to persuade him to return to more peaceful pursuits. Principal Robertson tells me that our premier dramatist received a bulky parcel not long ago, which was found to contain a large pair of ginger-bread pistols, and which must have been sent him by some wit."

At this Abercromby, who had been listening to Bannatyne's story with evident amusement, broke in with a loud laugh and a thump on the table as if he were challenging someone. "I know all about that tale, as I had it from a reliable authority whose name, however, I must not mention. Home had attended a supper-party the night before, and when one of the company said that he had been insulted by a churlish postilion, he exclaimed in that impetuous way of his, 'Where were your pistols?' The others concocted this plan between them; and, as our warrior was setting out for Musselburgh, the parcel arrived with a letter, stating that his friends could not think of his undertaking so hazardous a journey without being properly equipped."

"I am afraid that his martial ardour will not be cooled by such strategy," said Bannatyne. "He takes his adopted profession too seriously for that."

Abercromby smiled as he turned to Cullen. "By the way,

have you been worrying Principal Robertson lately? That was a cruel trick you played upon him and Lord Greville the other morning. To think that you should have had the audacity to seat yourself behind the curtain and lecture his lordship in bed for staying out so late at night! Really, really! And how you managed to carry it off successfully and extract a confession and a promise of reform from the unfortunate youth, I cannot imagine. No wonder that Robertson called you a designing dog, when Greville complained that it was too bad to admonish him twice over for the same offence, and the doctor discovered that you had been beforehand with his pupil. I consider that his language was exceedingly moderate, seeing what he has suffered at your hands."

"But have you heard the latest story about the Lord President?" observed Mackenzie, who fully entered into the joke and wished to draw out Cullen. "It is so good that he must tell it you himself."

Perhaps the most remarkable figure of the group was Cullen. Up to the present he had been silent and had not taken much interest in the proceedings. Indeed his outward demeanour betokened the utmost gravity, but anyone could see from the quizzical expression he assumed when addressed that he was a born actor. After slowly filling his glass he began with affected modesty: "Really, gentlemen, I hardly like to, for I fear that in this instance I have been somewhat indiscreet, though my lord has only himself to blame. Principal Robertson is an old friend, and he does not mind my harmless vagaries, but with the Lord President it is different. I happened to be his guest the other evening, and after dinner the company pressed me to exhibit the peculiarities of certain judges well known to you, Monboddo, Gardenstone, Kames and others, when our host solemnly desired me to add an imitation of himself. I hesitated at first, and tried to pass it off, but in the end I reluctantly consented. The others were convulsed, but his lordship was much nettled and stiffly remarked: 'Very amusing, Mr. Robert, very amusing, ye're a clever fellow, very clever; but just let me tell you that's no the way to rise at the bar.'"

"And after he had specially invited you to display your talent!" exclaimed Abercromby with disgust, when the laughter at the dexterous rendering of the judge's familiar tones had subsided. "For my part I have always regarded the Lord

President of the Court of Session as a cantankerous, cross-grained old curmudgeon, and I am now convinced of it."

"Hold hard with your epithets, Abercromby," entreated Mackenzie with a significant look. "No doubt our friend Cullen made the poor man feel rather uncomfortable, so perhaps there was some excuse for him."

"Your experience reminds me of a similar incident," began Bannatyne musingly, as he puffed great clouds of smoke from his pipe. "It concerns John Henderson, popularly known as the Bath Roscius, although he comes of a good Covenanting stock. He is now one of the ablest exponents of Shakespeare on the stage, and he appeared as Shylock at the Haymarket Theatre in London last year under Colman's management, as you may have read in *THE SCOTS MAGAZINE*. They say that Macklin, who has hitherto impersonated the Jew with great success, will have to look to his laurels. Henderson is, like you, an adept in mimicry, and Garrick, who, according to all accounts, is of a very jealous disposition, once refused him an engagement because he was annoyed by an imitation of himself, which his rival gave in his presence at the urgent request of the assembled company."

"Then all I can say is, save me from my friends," remarked Mackenzie. "But I do not think, Cullen, that the Lord President has it in his power to treat you as Garrick did Henderson. *Absit omen!*!"

Just then a loud rap was heard in the street below, and presently Lucky appeared followed by Craig, whom he ushered into the room with due ceremony. Like his brother advocates of the Mirror Club, the new-comer was subsequently raised to the bench, and his aspect was pre-eminently judicial. He had a determined mouth, bushy eyebrows, and a rather prominent hawk-like nose. After removing his heavy cloak with a sigh of satisfaction he joined the others at the table, and Lucky respectfully retired.

"Ah, here comes our Mr. Fleetwood," cheerily cried Mackenzie in allusion to Craig's latest contribution to the annals of the club on the effects of refinement and delicacy of taste as evidenced by the character of that fastidious person. "Now we can get to business. Mr. Craig, who was to have read us a paper to-night, has failed us. He tells me that he has been much occupied with his legal duties during the past week, which

accounts for his late arrival, and he has not found time to write on the subject which we selected at our last meeting. Perhaps he has taken warning by the fate of Abercromby yonder who, for want of due preparation, was compelled not so long ago to put his paper in his pocket and drink a bumper to its *manes*. But this deviation from our usual custom does not much matter. I have an important announcement to make which, if I mistake not, will meet with your approval. Since I last had the pleasure of presiding over this convivial gathering, I have had an interesting conversation with Craig, and, as it is his own idea, I will let him tell you what it was all about. Moreover, I see that he is impatient to begin."

"Indeed, I am, sir," said Craig complacently, "and with your leave I propose to outline the project I have in view. Our discourses have turned on manners, taste, and literature. We have cultivated letters in the midst of our daily avocations, and I hope I may say that it has been a source of instruction as well as amusement to us. But why should we keep these matters to ourselves? Is it not our duty to enlighten our fellow creatures, and to give them the benefit of our advice? What nobler ambition could inspire us than to rival in very deed those renowned essayists whose genius shed lustre on their age?"

Thus far, gradually gaining in fervour, had his eloquence carried him when Cullen's piping voice broke in. "Is it your intention that we should publish a weekly journal similar to *THE SPECTATOR* or *THE TATLER*?"

"That is just like you, Cullen," replied Craig testily; "whenever any one happens to be speaking you always attempt to anticipate what he wishes to say. I was about to remark that the examples of Addison and Steele should serve as an inspiration for us."

"A capital idea," cried Abercromby, not to be outdone by Cullen, and at this fresh interruption the speaker subsided in disgust. "Will you permit me to say that I have just completed a short paper which I think would be suitable for such a work as this? It is better than my last contribution which, as the President has referred to it, was, I admit, lacking in proportion and open to criticism on that account; and it illustrates the evil consequences of retiring from society, as appears from the character of an old college acquaintance of mine, whose identity it would of course be necessary to conceal under an assumed name."

At this Bannatyne interposed, mainly if not entirely with the idea of smoothing matters, for he too had literary wares for disposal. "And may I on my part add that I have endeavoured by means of certain imaginary correspondence addressed by a merchant and his wife to a mutual friend to show the advantage amiability in persons nearly connected? The letters of Mr. and Mrs. Gold (for they are so named) are, I venture to say, genuinely edifying."

Cullen, however, did not take the words as aimed at him, for he went on. "But you must hear me, gentlemen. I was present the other day at an election dinner, which was given in a small country town, where I was staying with a friend. The diverse head-gear of the company was ranged on the wall behind them, and, as I found the conversation of my neighbours,—the one a prosy professor and the other a gay young buck—somewhat tedious, I amused myself by fitting each hat to the head of its supposed owner. I have often noticed that in their dress people are apt to stamp in some distinctive way the image of their minds, and it seems to me that an instructive moral essay might be evolved out of this experience."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, not so fast, please!" urged Mackenzie, appealing for order. "I have not the shadow of a doubt that the combined intellect of this learned assembly will prove equal to the occasion, but pray permit Mr. Craig to proceed with his scheme."

Craig, somewhat mollified, then resumed. "I had intended to observe, when I was interrupted by my friends, that we must consider what topics, generally not individually speaking, should be included in a collection of this description. As I was saying, we have the shining examples of Addison and Steele to guide us, but we need not be the slavish imitators of their methods. Different times, different manners. You will recollect that Robert Hepburn, of Bearford, produced another *TATLER* at Edinburgh in the beginning of the century, and signed himself somewhat facetiously, Donald MacStaff of the North. It was too closely modelled on its predecessor, and did not succeed. In my opinion the foibles and fashionable affectations of the other sex, however, still afford a becoming theme for discussion, if not for censure. Did not Steele administer a gentle rebuke to his countrywomen, while at the same time he assured them, and rightly too, that this was the readiest way of adorning and instructing them?"

Bannatyne shrugged his shoulders. "If that is your serious intention, Craig, you will have your female acquaintance about your ears in no time, and you will never be able to hold up your head in public again."

"But surely you do not suppose, my dear sir, that our identity need be disclosed," sarcastically replied Craig. "It is essential for the success of my project that the strictest secrecy should be preserved. Mr. Mackenzie tells me that he will ask his good friend Mr. Creech to publish the work; and, as our President will of course conduct the paper, neither the publisher nor the public need know the names of the contributors. Let us write under various disguises: Barbara Bustle, Gabriel Gossip, Simon Softly, Letitia Lappet, Marjory Mushroom,—there's a selection for you to choose from."

"Ay, ay, Creech is an honest fellow," admitted Mackenzie; "he will not try to unravel the secret. I will broach the subject to him at his next levée, if I get a favourable opportunity, when Blair, Home, and his bosom friend Jupiter Carlyle are not buzzing about. He has the interests of literature at heart, and he will do his best to promote our object. I will merely tell him that certain *literati* of Scotland are concerned in the enterprise, but that I am expressly forbidden to mention any names. He will take my word for it, and you may leave the rest to me."

"Talking of disguises, why should we not invite assistance from outside correspondents?" suggested Cullen. "Lord Hailes might be asked to dilate on the virtues of ancient medicines under the signature of, say, Antiquarius, or the genial Dr. Robertson to describe his sufferings from an extreme propensity to friendship in the character of—what shall we say?—John Hearty."

"A good idea of yours, Cullen, but I think that Hearty is a subject which would suit the Man of Feeling better, and perhaps we may be able to persuade him to undertake it," said Bannatyne, turning to Mackenzie. "Would you also consent to publish your *TALE OF LA ROCHE*? It is a fragment, which, in my opinion, you are bound to give to the world. The character of the venerable clergyman, whose patience and resignation under the affliction of his daughter's death so moved the kind-hearted philosopher, is a truly noble one."

Mackenzie bowed with the air of one who was visibly touched

by the tribute. "I thank you for your generous approbation of my humble efforts, Mr. Bannatyne; but when I discussed this proposal with my friend Craig, we thought that it would not be advisable to introduce questions of religion into a publication which is intended more for entertainment than for serious instruction."

"But will you not make an exception in this case, sir?" pleaded Cullen. "Your refusal would be a real loss to literature."

The Man of Feeling sighed. "Perhaps you will permit me to consider this suggestion more at my leisure, gentlemen. The subject is to me especially sacred, for, as some of you may have guessed, in the philosopher who relieves the sainted La Roche and his daughter in their distress, I have portrayed our late friend David Hume, as the best of unbelievers. I need not enlarge in this company on the wit, the good nature, or the literary attainments of that great man, whose recent death we all deplore; but I may say that in my imperfect sketch I have endeavoured to the best of my ability to bring out one side of his character, which has not hitherto received the attention it deserves, namely, his ready sympathy with suffering and his reluctance to obtrude his own opinions on those who differed from him. Whether I have succeeded or not is a matter of which you alone can judge."

"I am sure that we all appreciate your views on this subject, which you have so feelingly expressed," replied Abercromby warmly, "though we await your decision with impatience. But what about the letters of the Homespun Family, which you read to us the other night? Think what a sensation they would create! There must be many people of moderate means to whom they would appeal, who suffer from contact with the rich and worldly, for that I understand was the point you desired to emphasise. John Homespun is an admirable example of the unsophisticated country gentleman, and as for my lady's lacquey, Mr. Papillot, with his airs and his graces, why he is as good as Trip in Sheridan's comedy, which I saw on its first production at Drury Lane last year. The portion of the narrative which I like best, if I may say so with respect, is the account of the great lady's unexpected visit to the family in the country, and we cannot but feel sorry for Miss Elizabeth Homespun when she finds that her fashionable acquaintance neglects her in town."

"I am quite willing to accede to this request," returned Mackenzie cheerfully, for he hoped by means of this palatable correspondence to mitigate a flagrant social abuse, "and rest assured that my pen shall always be at your service. I have some thoughts of introducing another disturbing element in the once peaceful household of the Homespuns in the shape of a wealthy Indian Nabob, but I will say no more about him at present, for I should like to know what other material is ready to hand. Did you not tell me some time ago, Craig, that you had written a description of a Macaroni?"

"That I have," replied the other, vastly pleased that attention had been drawn to this paper, which he had carefully preserved as a choice morsel for the delectation of the Club when occasion arose; "his name is Mr. Joseph Fielding. He is an impecunious individual like Goldsmith's Beau Tibbs. You will recollect that this estimable person boasts of his gallantry and says of himself, 'I take a fine woman as some animals do their prey,—stand still, and swoop they fall into my mouth.' Well, Mr. Joseph, who by the way tells his own story, is built of the same mould. He too prides himself on his powers of fascinating the fair sex, and explains what an important personage he is at village weddings and similar festivities. He lives entirely on the generosity of his elder brother, Sir George, and accompanies Lady Fielding on her round of visits. He is as Mrs. Malaprop says of Captain Absolute, 'the very pine-apple of politeness.' Moreover, he is an excellent shot and spends most of his time killing game."

This account of his hero so delighted Mackenzie that he exclaimed enthusiastically. "Bravo, Craig! That will do capitally. I long to read your paper, and you must give us others of a like nature."

"As our primary object is to inspire the public with a taste for *belles-lettres*," ventured Abercromby, "we cannot do better than follow in the footsteps of those distinguished writers Craig has already named. From the account Bannatyne gave us on a former occasion of his ideal landlord, Mr. Umphraville, it seems to me that his study must be based to some extent on Sir Roger. To include this sketch would, I think, be a step in the right direction."

"Why, of course," replied Mackenzie, addressing the member named; "I had quite forgotten the generous Squire for the

moment, and you will no doubt add some chapters to round off his character."

"With pleasure, sir, seeing that I have as yet but imperfectly developed it," modestly acquiesced Bannatyne. "It is true, as Abercromby says, that I had Addison's worthy knight in mind; but I need hardly say that it was not my desire to challenge comparison with that master of English prose."

"Then I think that we may leave the discussion of further details until we reassemble next week, and in the meantime I will consult Mr. Creech," said Mackenzie. "But what is the title of our production to be? As we shall still consider it our business to reflect the age in which we live, I can hardly imagine a more suitable motto than the well-known phrase which we borrowed for our club from Hamlet's address to the players; and as it is quite evident that you agree with me, I will say no more. Gentlemen, I raise my glass to the success of **THE MIRROR!**!"

"I have but one word to add," broke in Craig hurriedly, "which is that we hold an anniversary dinner in honour of its foundation."

The others signified their hearty approval of this suggestion, and joined in the toast with acclamation. Thus was their journal started on its successful career. And as the members of the Mirror Club filed down the narrow stairs and went their several ways, they felt satisfied that their evening had not been misspent, and congratulated themselves on the prospect of reviving in some measure the ancient glories of the Augustan era.

GEORGE A. SINCLAIR

## THE FUNERAL OF A MAORI CHIEF

HE had died some days before in Auckland, where he had been a clerk in the Woods and Forests Department, and where the close confinement of office work had killed him. He went off in a rapid decline before he was forty, and they brought him home to the shores of the lake over against Rotorua, and set the heavy lead-lined coffin down on the threshold of a great tribal hut, where all his tribe might gather to do him honour.

These huts are of wood, planned for a whole tribe to sleep in, perhaps thirty or forty feet long, with steep pent-roofs and wide eaves ; and they are adorned in front with wooden carvings, the uprights being genealogical trees, ferocious men seated one above another, always with long protruding tongues, and the cross-beams bearing the characteristic Maori whorls, or scrolls, copied, as some say, from the prints on a man's fingers, or from the curled fern-fronds, whose roots are eaten in times of scarcity, or from the spiral shells that enclosed a favourite food.

Under the eaves, in the front of the hut, and shut in, as it were, by the projecting side walls, was a wooden platform raised some inches from the ground, and on it the chief lay, his ancestors scowling down upon him. The one door, also adorned with carving, was back in the half shadow, a little to one side, and on the other side, in the greater space, rested the coffin upon strewn green rushes. It was covered with mats, those fine mats, hand-woven of the silkiest mountain flax and feathers, of which the women's secret is now fast departing. And round the coffin hung and rested many photographic portraits of the dead man, whose correct European costume, set off by shining gilt frames, contrasted ill with its present surroundings, for on the carpet of green rushes, close against the coffin, squatted, Maori fashion, the dead man's nearest female relations ; his widow, who had neither eaten nor drunk for six days, and four or five older

women. She was said to be a Salvation Army lass,—so strangely are things here intermingled—but she wore no outward sign of that creed ; like the rest of the women she was dressed all in black, and in their pose of utter exhaustion and misery they were hard to distinguish from one another. On the other side of the doorway a girl in vivid magenta squatted alone, an infant in her arms. In front of her, on the edge of the platform, stood three old women, also near relations, wailing shrilly, and weeping so that the tears coursed down their brown cheeks and fell upon the ground. It is not manners to wipe these tears away. They were standing on the platform facing all the company in order to exhibit to the full these outward signs of their grief ; and had they once wished to shirk publicity or inconvenience and to use a pocket-handkerchief, they would have taken the first steps along the road that will lead a younger generation to retire to weep in private, European-wise. Probably long before that they will have lost their present power of shedding salt tears at will.

The same three women went on wailing. They were of the old school and of high lineage, as the tattooing round their mouths showed. The men are now tattooed no more. One old man had some faint patterns on his cheeks ; but the chiefs' sons now go to school and to Te Aute College, and the adornment was never permitted to common men. The women cling longer to old custom, and not a few young tattooed mouths smiled upon us, showing magnificent white teeth. The process of tattooing is horribly painful, and the personal possession of a well-tattooed head indicated a power of endurance befitting a chief who had to lead his tribe through the old, hard, cruel, fighting days. But when the white men came, mere power of survival through endurance was of little worth ; it did not stop the white man's bullets, and the old custom of tattooing, which heretofore had indirectly fortified the race, helped to kill it off. Thus do customs grow obsolete.

No doubt the widow's fasting also came down from old-time custom, when only those who could fast through days of famine could survive. It is cruel now only because it is so useless ; but not even the civilisation of the Woods and Forests Department, not even the teaching of the Salvation Army, had sunk into this woman deep enough to make her want to eat. It was a foolish question of an unthinking Englishwoman, " Won't they even let

her have a drop of water?" They would let her readily enough, but her free will to endure is an honour to her and reflects honour upon her dead lord.

And to these Maoris it seems fitting not only that they should grieve, but that the signs of their grief should be exhibited as widely and as definitely as possible. That is why a steam-launch was run over from Rotorua, and visitors from the hotels were conveyed there and back for two shillings a head. It was horribly intrusive to stand and gaze on grief with alien, uncomprehending eyes; and perhaps the mourners felt it so. Yet on the whole they were flattered. The presence of many white men was an honour: had this not been a funeral above the ordinary, they would not have come; and the idea is not so far removed from our own funeral ceremonies that we can afford to scoff.

It was hard to remember always the dead man lying under the graven eaves and to keep a straight face. The first effect of the strange wailing wore off after a weary hour's repetition, and the sight of the mourners gave rise to a rush of mixed impressions. It was so touching; they had tried so earnestly to follow European customs, though the following of them is indeed, for these people, the way to death. And it was so comical; for their clothes appeared to be selected at haphazard, and beneath all the women's costumes protruded a pair of brown legs and feet. As head-dress one mourner wore a woollen handkerchief, tied so as to show her crown in the middle and her straight, coarse, black hair; the second went bare-headed; the third had a European straw hat. One woman wore a man's short grey coat over a scant blue petticoat. Another had tied a pink silk scarf round her waist, and it seemed to be needed to keep her black skirt and bodice from falling to the ground. The dress of the third, in spite of the heat of the weather and the exhausting nature of her grief, was surmounted by a heavy plaid shawl, draped mat-wise over the right shoulder. Her bent face was dripping above her eyes, right up to the edge of her hair.

Nor were the numerous guests less strangely attired. A bright coloured cotton Empire dress was half covered by a man's velveteen shooting-jacket. Several women wore men's tweed coats and men's felt hats of khaki-colour; one had draped herself in a woollen antimacassar; and there were skirts of every brilliant colour, and blouses worn outside them, dangling loose. It was

a close, hot day, inclined to mist and rain, but nobody in dressing herself appeared to have taken any account of the weather ; her one aim was to exhibit the best clothes she had got. The brightest rose-pinks and blues and mauves blossomed round us where the friends of the family sat in groups upon the grass, colours to be seen wherever Maoris foregather, and not unwelcome, for New Zealand is a land of leaves and greenery, rather than of flowers. In all the towns of the North Island Maori cotton prints are sold, stuffs exported from England expressly to meet the Maori taste, with vivid ground colours and designs of familiar objects, the scarlet *rata* blossom, the *tui* feathers that only chiefs may wear, the *wiki*, or parson-bird, and others peculiar to the New Zealand bush.

Men, women, and children of all ages sat there quite contentedly through interminable hours, the men, and many of the women, smoking. All the neighbourhood had arrived or was arriving in buggies, on horseback, men and women alike astride. There were many huts near by, for this was a considerable village, but there were not nearly enough to shelter everybody for the night. Many of the people had been there already since the day before, and the burial (according to the rites of the English Church) was not to be until the morrow. Therefore, though Maoris sleep thick on the floor of their huts, a great circular tent had been erected, with a bedding of green *ti*-tree upon the ground.

All comers were welcomed and fed. That is why a funeral is so serious an expense, and has been known before now to bring a family to ruin, even though, in obedience to communistic Maori custom, visitors bring offerings in money or kind,—a pig or two, wild or tame, a sack of potatoes or *kumaras*, some fish, and so on.

The funeral guests were eating shell-fish. Tables had been set out in a long shed, and on them could be seen from the doorway an abundance of fresh-water mussels (clams, as they are called) and potatoes, bread and jam, and tea-cups. This was to stave off the first pangs of hunger ; across the green a more solid feast was preparing.

No Maori cooks inside his house. It would be impossible so to do, for there is never more than one room, nor any chimney, and the walls and roofs of the original native huts, those that were built before the white man came and brought iron tools,

were made only of flax leaves and rushes. A round pit had been dug, and lined with smooth stones from the bed of the stream, and on these a wood fire had been lighted. It had burned down to ashes by the time we came up, and women were raking it out flat, and laying a wreath of green willow, which just fitted the hole, upon the red-hot stones. Then two or three bushels of peeled potatoes were put in, and some sweet potatoes, which the Maoris call *kumaras*, and some joints of meat. On the top of the mass any precious thing would have been placed, whitebait, for example, or a fowl, enclosed in a basket or wrapping of grass ; but this was a great feast, and quantity was demanded rather than delicacy. A bucketful of water was flung over the whole ; a large mat or two was placed over it, and on the mats was piled the earth dug out of the pit. Four hours or so hence the mats would be carefully lifted off by the corners, and the earth with it, and the food would be cooked, and, according to common report, half roasted, half steamed, and most delicious. There was also a great fire of logs made out in the open ; at either end a forked stick, on which rested the trunk of a young tree, supporting three large pots of seething meat. A shoulder of veal was being cooked in a yet more primitive fashion, for it was tilted edgeways against the bottom of one of the pots, toasting itself among the wood-ashes.

All this time the wailing continued, resounding across the bit of greensward as we pried into these details of Maori house-keeping. One of the three old women sat down tired out ; another slowly took her place, and at once when she faced her public her tears began to flow. There was a constant succession of new-comers who stood for a while facing the hut, at a few yards' distance, heads bowed and tears falling. The effect was of heartfelt and desolating grief.

This dead man had died of the plague the white men brought, not longing to die, and in the prime of life. Amid all this business of feasting and this grotesque behaviour the thought of him came back, lying there under the feather mats and beneath the gilt-framed photographs. We sat down on the grass, forming another group in the medley, and just at that moment they carried the photographs round one by one, that we might admire them. And then the women came to an end of their part, or had sunk exhausted, and the men stepped to the front.

An elderly man in a curiously boyish knickerbocker costume of

blue serge advanced, holding the dead man's fighting spear of carved wood. He strutted up and down, brandishing the spear to emphasize his points, raising his voice to a shout, addressing the assemblage. He was pronouncing a eulogy on the deceased. Maoris are all born orators ; to talk is their national amusement. Their vocabulary is not large, and there was much repetition of word and phrase and gesture ; so much we, in our blank ignorance, could perceive. Suddenly he turned towards a group of men reclining on the grass, and they rose and sang, a sort of chant or recitative, their voices strangely vibrant and sweet ; for all the Maori race is musical, and every man and woman can sing.

Then another old friend spoke his eulogy, marching to and fro a few steps at a time, and stopping to stamp upon the ground ; then a third, then a fourth. They might go on so for hours, for the dead man was a great chief and well thought of, and Maoris have no idea of time. And in and out came always the strange songs in chorus ; and in the pauses the sound of the women's sobs became audible.

Before starting we had been promised the sight of a *haka* or national war-dance ; but the Maoris are a people with grand manners, and the *haka* is an amusement wherewith they beguile for their guests the long dark evening hours, when no Maori chooses to expose himself abroad. A *haka* might be danced after the early sunset, when we had gone away to our own place, and when the wailing and the songs which were part of the chief's funeral ceremony were ended. But how could an amusement be set going when guests were constantly arriving ? The performers might have to break off at any moment to receive them. The late comers, through no fault of their own, would miss part of the fun. The breach of good manners was self-evident, and we felt like clumsy barbarians because we had not seen the point without explanation. But the disappointment was great, for a *haka* danced amid native surroundings and for native amusement is now rare to see. *Hakas* are danced any night in the public hall at Rotorua for the white man and his money, but that is another story. The old customs are dying. Once upon a time, we are told, there were two *hakas*, one "not fit for decent persons to see," and the other a war-dance meant to strike terror into the enemy's heart. And now under the Pax Britannica there is no war, no enemy.

Besides, how could a correct gentleman dance a war-dance in a new grey overcoat and a billycock hat? He already looked incongruous enough standing in the doorway among the wailing women. In spite of his position, which plainly proved it, it was hard to believe that he was their near relation. He alone played a double part, mourning with the women, then speaking his eulogy among the men. His features were those of a European, and his face was only dark enough to be accounted pleasantly romantic in a land of fair skins. But he was betrayed by his forgetfulness of the use of a pocket-handkerchief at the supreme moment when a sudden rush of tears made instant choice inevitable between fingers and cambric. At such emotional crises the old ways of childhood come uppermost for us all, and the fingers travelled quickly, after which it is sad to record that he wiped them on his new coat, till, hastily remembering his handkerchief, he drew it forth, new, spotless and correct, like himself and all his costume. It was a typical struggle between the old nature and the new training. We all hark back when our feelings are stirred; and such things are of mere custom, not of the heart, which we too often forget.

And if we felt like smiling over this breach of what we understand by good manners, the Maoris, on their side, observed and did not smile at our bad breeding; for, openly and unashamed, we were eating lunch from our pockets, or even from the contents of picnic-baskets spread out upon the grass. It was not that we were eating in front of the dead man, forgetful for the moment of the solemn occasion that had brought us together. Ceremonies that continue for hours must be interspersed with eating in some form, and it had not been thought amiss that we should wander away from the big hut to look at the ovens, and to note and admire the vast quantities of food that had been gathered together. But we ought, in accordance with Maori custom, to have withdrawn to privacy before eating, or else to have offered a share of our food to our neighbours, white and brown.

The polity of the Maoris is communistic. A limited communism is all that they adopted, for each family had even in the old days its own food-basket, which it was the prime duty of each wife to keep constantly replenished. There were no set meal-times; the men came in, looked in the food-basket, and ate when they felt so inclined. On grand occasions like this, though

all were about to feast in common, it would be chiefly at one family's expense, and there are rich and poor in every tribe. But, on the other hand, most of the land is held in common, and most of the quarrels and wars with the white man have originated in a dispute as to whether some chief might or might not alienate tribal property. The tribal customs are now in a transition state, and have lost their old definiteness of form ; but certainly Maoris neither practise nor understand the rigid individualism which we have adopted, and it was this difference of opinion that lay at the bottom of our breach of good manners, and of their condemnation of European breeding. They have learned, however, to make allowances for white men, whose manners are so much less distinguished than their own, and they were far too polite to pass open comment on our behaviour.

It is instructive to learn that the Maoris' well-wishers desire to break down the communism of old times. What they are dying of is want of interest quite as much as any disease. Plenty of food is to be had without hard striving. They may not fight among themselves ; nobody attacks them ; it is hopeless to fight the British. It is thought, therefore, that in manual work salvation may be found for the individual or for the race. Yet the Maori is not by nature a continuous worker. He will exert himself by fits and starts ; but there seems even a doubt whether he is so made that he can go on working day after day, whether it was not the monotony as much as the confinement of office work that killed our chief. And if any man chances to be born with the European faculty for persistency, or to have acquired it, why should he trouble himself to do more than his fellows if the fruits of his labours are common property in his family or in his tribe, to the lazy as well as to the industrious ? It is strange to see this argument practically demonstrated in New Zealand, where all recent legislation has been in the direction of communism, and where its results among the white men are already to be seen (so some think) in a low level of general achievement. One is forced to wonder whether the air has anything to do with national policy, and whether the Maoris have given to the white man ideas as ill-fitting as many that the white man has tried to impart to them.

Meanwhile the Government has to deal with the question of Maori lands, vast tracts set apart for them, that they do not cultivate nor even keep clear of noxious weeds. The question

is by no means simple, and there is a great deal to be said on both sides. New Zealanders and white emigrants are clamouring for land to cultivate, and all the good land in the country already belongs to somebody. What we do not use, we lose ; it is a law of nature, which surely should be the surest and most just basis of a country's laws. The Maori lands are presently in part to be resumed, and a money payment is to be given instead.

Yet why should the Maoris use their land except after their own fashion ? Is not that what it was given to them for ? They choose to have it to roam over rather than to cultivate. Many of them are rich beyond their needs from the proceeds of land already leased or sold. And their wants are but few ; they live the simple life. A wooden hut (now that the Government has forbidden the erection of the old whares of rushes), eels and clams from the river, corn and potatoes from a cultivated plot that can be shifted yearly and recuperates itself by lying fallow, wild pigs and wild cattle from the bush, wild horses from the plains, clothing of a mixed sort, tobacco, tea, and little besides ; having these things they are content ; strong drink is the one thing of which they may not buy so much as they wish and can afford to pay for. They choose to sit on the ground ; they cook out of doors ; wood is everywhere plentiful ; they lie on the floor at night. And they are dying out and they know it ; the education we have given them forces them to see that. What have they to live for ? The Pax Britannica has robbed them of the lust of life.

E. A. B.

## A WAYSIDE COTTAGE

IT was no rural moss-grown cottage overrun with roses and honeysuckles, but a plain little dwelling, one of a set of four, with nothing very picturesque in its appearance. It is the inhabitants that give real value to a house, not the externals or the furnishing. Both were simple enough in this case, but the inhabitants were of pure gold. They had their notable peculiarities ; they were eccentric,—a laughing-stock, if you will ; yet their hearts were excellently good. There was a garden in front of the house, about twelve feet square ; its few flowers were gathered by youthful neighbours who generally neglected to ask permission. At the rear of the house was a rather larger plot of ground, containing a well whose chief characteristic seemed to be that it yielded no water ; and a mouldering sty at the end of the plot proclaimed to the world that my friend kept no pig. This deficiency was balanced by the keeping of fowls, and the fowl-house presented a curious medley of contrivances for preventing the researches of the young neighbours aforesaid. Here, too, were to be found various mousetraps and devices of my friend's own invention, which he sometimes exhibited at local agricultural shows, where visitors were apt to think that he himself was the more curious exhibition. His fertile brain was not only occupied with the catching of mice ; he lived in the thick of numberless schemes for the remedy of every earthly ill with the exception of his own personal affairs, which he entirely neglected, and which were always in a bad way. He had brought some of these schemes before the notice of Government, and he proudly showed me the formal circulars of official acknowledgment. He had memorialised Australian governors on the matter of killing rabbits ; and he had tried to rouse home opinion with respect to a device of his for cleansing the roads without water. As a method of suction is now applied to our own drawing-rooms with some success, it does not appear that his idea was altogether unworkable ; but it would rapidly have denuded the highways by

carrying away their surface. Sometimes he made himself obnoxious by trying to remove other ancient institutions besides dirt, such as drunkenness and bad language. The obvious result was to have a portion of the bad language transferred to himself ; but I have heard him say that a general improvement in public manners of late years was owing to his efforts. Those to whom Providence denies success are sometimes thus rewarded. In all his failures he had a consciousness of having performed much.

Another of my friend's doings was to advocate the establishment of public *crèches*, which have since become more general. For a time his wife tried to keep a small one on her own account, something between a school and a nursery. The arrangement was that neighbours should send their small children, and pay as they felt able ; apparently they felt able to pay very little, but they would sometimes send an egg or a cabbage. The attempt was not successful, degenerating into a pandemonium of unruly infant life. The dear lady, a triumph of nature on the side of inefficient well-meaning, lived in a constant expectation that times would mend ; she was always cheerful, and always thanking God for very small mercies. To her, perhaps, the mercies were truly great ; we cannot irreverently judge ; they were certainly not benefits that an outward eye could recognise. Her husband had lost his money by sheer inattention and mismanagement ; he was busied with plans for the amelioration of universal ills, while his own larder was bare and his room carpetless. When he had lived in better condition, he had exhausted his resources on a garden that returned little and a gardener who deluded and robbed him. When the soil bore anything eatable, the best of it went into the pockets of this old villain, who was sexton of a neighbouring church. Contact with the soil ought to render a man wholesome and honest ; to my boyish mind this man was a monster of duplicity. I cannot think that I misjudged him ; but he had a victim, himself honourable as daylight, who certainly met depredation half-way. Some men seem designed by nature to be gulled and pillaged ; they are probably outnumbered by their enemies in a ratio of twenty to one. Frankly, my old friend was a simpleton, with the attendant obstinacy. There was no having patience with him, except in the day when his own folly and the knavery of others had stripped him bare.

He was literary also, and wrote much in prose and verse. A few of his pieces had appeared in the newspapers ; his greatest pride was that he had once been spoken of as "our local poet." Some day he intended to publish a volume of verse, from which he anticipated large fame and financial profit ; that day never came. He wrote ballads not without a glimpse of humour, and moral pieces after the style of a century back, which he would read aloud to me in a high sing-song voice. A play of his entitled *FINGAL* had the honour of being declined by Macready, in a kind apologetic letter. Years afterwards, when he died a lonely widower, his manuscripts were ruthlessly destroyed by his only sister. She had disowned him during his life, but at his death she came to take away the few sticks that might be worth possessing, and to burn the papers on which he had poured the loving devotion of a lifetime. She spurned them as worthless rubbish, but I think there must have been some things in her own nature that were far less valuable. I saw the litter of torn papers lying in the bare deserted room,—things that I had remembered from my boyhood, sacred in some sort as a record of hopes and ambitions. Sorry stuff some of them may have been, not the value of a brass farthing in the lot from a pecuniary standpoint ; she flouted and crushed them as she had once flouted and scorned the dreaming follies and lovable illusions of her brother now dead. There were some things still un torn,—one a small penned fragment from the man's wife who had died before him, thanking him in simple poorly scrawled words for the happiness that he had brought into her life. I very near flushed for shame at having read it, as I thrust the morsel of paper back into the heap ; it seemed like tearing aside a veil to peer into a heart's holy of holies. The poor lines had been written on the anniversary of their wedding-day, in years before the cloud of adversity had settled down on them ; it showed how, in this junction of two natures both eccentric, both a butt for their neighbours' careless laughter, there had been the hallowing presence of love, the beauty of trust, the transfiguring touch of that which alone can raise us above the material and the sordid. Both lay dead in unhonoured graves ; the life-work of the poor foolish man lay here in shreds of torn paper, but among them gleamed with unsullied purity this scrap that had been raised to the dignity of having conveyed the utterance of a true heart's

devotion. For a moment I had hesitated ; should I keep it ? Nay, the thing was too holy ; what right had I to finger it ? Let it pass to the flames, as the bodies of the couple had passed to the dust ; the spiritual part lies not in mortal clay nor in fragments of written paper.

But this is a digression of anticipation. I knew my friends for many years, and enjoyed many glad hours with them, before, one after the other, they slipped into the Silent Land. There are cheerful things to remember among the things of infinite pathos. Poor as they became, and myself a lad whose pence were never numerous, we assorted together in a somewhat quaint companionship ; and there were usually aspects of rich comedy to be enjoyed. We had glorious rambles, in rough picnic fashion, the fare homely but keenly relished. Sometimes a little spirit-lamp accompanied us, when we would bivouac beneath the trees and boil our kettle. Once, on an autumn nightfall, we got to a quiet corner of a field not far from the highway, and there lit a small fire for this same purpose. The delight of gathering twigs and lighting them, the scent of the burning wood, the earthy and smoky odour that clings to the hands,—all these things appeal strongly to some gipsy element that abides with us ; I still find myself longing to light a fire on some bare patch among the woodland, or to build one of driftwood on the shore. It was dark ; the flames made an oasis of light, flickering on our faces, sometimes driving the smoke into our eyes. The very discomforts were inspiring and exhilarating ; and there was a sense of the mystery of darkness around. Strange breathings came out of the shadow, and the dim muttering of dusky trees. Night had blotted out the civilised and the commonplace ; here was a corner of primeval wilderness. It was a moment of grave joy, ever to be remembered. The glamour lingered in the boy's heart, as we linked arms and footed it homeward afterwards. Many other such walks we had, tramping along field-paths of summer sunshine or roads of autumnal loveliness, while the good woman related long tales that often lacked coherence and consequence. A lad's imagination was easily aroused.

When they left their house in the town and removed to the small wayside cottage, I visited them occasionally, and a bed was put up for me in the little front sitting-room. A pair of glowering family portraits hung on the walls, heavily done in oils and blackened with age. Probably they had been good enough

folk, but the painter had not humanised them ; they fell into the hands of the sister ultimately. An antiquated Natural History in dirty brown calf stood on the table, and a similarly draped book of French devotions ; my kind hostess was the daughter of a Frenchman who had been a prisoner in England during the Napoleonic wars. I understood that he had belonged to a gentle family ; amid all her personal humbleness the dame nourished some harmless pride of ancestry, based on pretensions unlikely ever to be acknowledged or disputed. There was a small cast of the Virgin and two babes on the mantel-shelf, which a sailor-brother had brought from Genoa. This little image I still possess, a sacred relic sadly battered ; it stands to me as a symbol of something more than its original significance. I know not what became of the books. When I first knew the lady, she used to take the bulky French volume for a morning walk before breakfast ; but I never saw her read it. It is a memory to smile at, with sad twinges.

In the days when I visited them we went for extensive rambles about the country-side, sometimes getting a lift in a cart ; we were not even above an empty coal-cart. We carried our own provision, or if not, a few pence would go a long way among the hospitable cottagers. Once we had tea in the home of a collier. The husband and a son had just returned black from the pit, and disappeared sheepishly to cleanse themselves. Like so many such persons, the wife who entertained us was a rigid Calvinist, and she told us that sometimes she almost wished her children might die young, so that she might feel assured of their future. She seemed to think that life is given to us with one chance of being saved against ninety-nine of being lost for ever ; but she was a dear good-hearted creature for all that. Boy as I was, I revolted at the hideous doctrine, but was too shy to say anything. I recollect meeting another such woman, far less kindly in manner, who was a notable class-leader in her district, and evidently felt the weight of greatness that her piety and gift of talking had thrust upon her. She eyed me with some sternness, and when my companions said that I came of good religious parents, she retorted that that was not enough to save me. I had never supposed it was ; yet I felt a reprobate. There had been a glow of warm human feeling about the other kind creature, a motherly woman whom one could have hugged with satisfaction ; but this dame had, outwardly at least, the repellent frigidity that we

sometimes associate with the "unco guid," a quality that makes us take so much more kindly to human-hearted sinners than to narrow-breasted saints. But I have known saints who had the human quality also, and they are the salt of the earth.

We wandered from field to field, and village to village, inspecting the old churches and moralising among the tombstones, crossing bare moorlands in the strange red afterglow of sunset, losing our way, sinking ankle-deep in marshy meadows and watery lanes, reaching home tired and hungry at nightfall. If things went amiss, my hostess would be fretful for a moment, and ask her husband why he had lost his fortune ; the question often occurred at the most inappropriate times, and the poor man had not a word to answer. But the cloud would pass rapidly : she would cheer us onward with good spirits that declined ever to be permanently damped ; and the soiled weary wanderers would reach home at last. Then the good lady would light the fire, possibly with fragments of wood gathered during the walk ; she carried a bag in which such waifs might commune with apples or lumps of bread and cheese. Soon the kettle would boil, and we would settle down to a comfortable hour. My host would read his poetry to me, or expound some elaborate scheme for the benefit of the human race ; his wife would fall asleep, and awake presently to say she had heard every word and how beautiful it was ! She was very proud of her husband, though she did not profess to understand him ; it was only when unduly pressed by circumstances that she questioned him about the loss of his money. On one Sunday night we went to church ; and though I had repeatedly urged the good lady to be prompt in preparing tea, she never could by any possibility be punctual ; we reached the church after the sermon had begun. Though so truly a pious soul, she was a very somnolent listener, and we had scarcely been seated five minutes before she began to nod. At home this sort of thing did not matter, but here in a prominent seat it was awkward, for she slept audibly. A terrifying sense of the comical came over me ; her husband nudged me and whispered to me to waken her, but I dared not. She was nodding and falling forward convulsively, just drawing up when a collapse seemed most imminent, while I endured agonies in the attempt to stifle my laughter. I fear there have been other times when I have been grateful at the close of a sermon, the gratitude being for its cessation, not for its quality ;

but on this occasion I had cause for the most devout thankfulness. I still remember that the subject was Thomas, called Didymus. Outside the church the good man and myself assailed her with reproaches. In reply she asked him why he had lost his fortune ; that, she said, was the cause of her having to work so hard and getting so sleepy. There was a trace of logic in her excuse after all. She followed this by launching forth in praises of the sermon ; it had been beautiful, magnificent, she had listened eagerly, though her eyes were shut. The excellent soul !

It was in this cottage, a few years later, that the good woman died. Their circumstances had not improved, except for the fact that a very small annuity was bestowed upon them by some Benevolent Society ; and I fear that most of this was swallowed by the rent of the poor house. The fowls disappeared one by one, and were never replaced. One valuable thing had been preserved from their former home, a treasured family possession ; it was an old wooden chest of exquisite carving, the lid representing the divine birth in the manger. This may have been worth a hundred pounds ; it was pawned for five. The inevitable happened ; the payments were not kept up, and the prize lapsed to the pawnbroker. The old man raved like a maniac when he learned that the chest had gone beyond recovery. It was years later that I heard of this ; but even had I known I could have done little but advise, and the advice might not have been followed. There were other things that I guessed at, yet could do little to help. The comfortless existence that once, when we were all merry together, had been something of an amusement and a jest, began to weigh hardly, especially on the woman. Her spirits did not obviously sink, but her health did. She had never been a notable housewife ; the difficulties now became too great for her. Her constitution succumbed to insufficient nourishment and to a lack of cleanliness,—the words must be written, bitter though they are. At last she lay on that bed from which she never would rise. Kind helpers came to the door, and were refused admittance by the poor crazy husband ; he told them she had all that she required. Perhaps those strong womanly hands might have saved her life ; it was not to be. The room in which she lay was squalid and bare. Only her husband and the sailor-brother were with her ; I hope to tell a part of his story elsewhere. She had been dying quietly for hours, just sinking into unconsciousness. With her waning

strength she had found words to ask if I had sent any message ; thank God, I had. These two men, contrasts and almost enemies, disliking each other cordially, sat there beside the dying woman ; they were alike in this, that both their hearts were wrung with the anguish of a great love. At length they held the mirror to her lips, and no breath tarnished it. The husband fell on his knees at her bedside, crying and praying aloud ; the brother, more self-possessed and sullen in his agony, attended to the last duties. There was an inquest, the further to harrow his feelings. This and the funeral over, the brother returned to his almshouse, and the poor husband, for a time, was lodged in a workhouse infirmary, after which, his small annuity remaining, he removed to a lodging of a single room. I met him in the town, not many weeks later, the same impractical and irresponsible creature as ever. He called me by my familiar name, in the old intimate manner that recalled such tender memories. He talked of his dead wife and cried a little ; then he turned to other subjects, laughed gaily at some sorry jest of his own, thought of his wife again and cried once more. My heart ached for him, poor, lonely, incapable. The currents of the world had been too rough for this crank and unbalanced bark.

He lived eight or nine years longer, in the dingy room where I sometimes visited him. To the last his brain was fertile of schemes for every purpose but his own betterment. He still scribbled a bit, spending much of his scanty income in paper and postages. A few months before the end he expressed a determination to learn algebra, and to teach himself singing. His voice might have moved the laughter of gods and men, and he had not the germ of an ear for tune ; yet I listened with more or less patience as he sang a dismal succession of hymns and propounded some crazy idea on the theory of melody. One morning his landlady heard a heavy fall ; she found him dead upon the floor. I was away at the time, and only returned in time to see the scattered torn papers that seemed like an emblem of his poor torn life.

ARTHUR L. SALMON

## MR. FRITTERBY'S CALL

A PLATITUDE has only to be repeated often enough and it will become an epigram. To give an instance : "The poet," people will say, "is born, not made"; and not one in a million stops to consider the impossibility of making a poet. This most obvious of platitudes has passed into the language and is now regarded as a sort of message. No doubt the fact that it was originally uttered in Latin invested it at one time with a certain solemnity, but it is remarkable that it should continue to be successful in these intellectual days.

What is true of the poet is true of the signalman, the average-adjuster, the quack-physician, the orator, the bill-sticker, and every other artist and tradesman. To the professional beauty alone it does not apply.

The orator, then, is born, not made. Mr. Fritterby was an orator. He was also an oil-and-colourman. An oil-and-colourman is born, not made.

His unmiraculous origin being established, we may continue with the examination of his case.

An oil-and-colourman, in the course of his business, enjoys many opportunities for usefulness, but few for oratory. These he must seek outside the shop.

Oratory, unlike truth, will out. An orator can be happy married, but not silent. He is as cursed as is the victim of alcoholism. As the drunkard to his bottle, so the orator returns to his platform. As to the lover of good wine the sound of the drawing of a cork is the most musical in creation, so to the orator the chairman's declaration, "Mr. Buggins will now address the meeting," is the most harmonious combination of words possible to human speech.

The disease first attacked Mr. Fritterby when he was a youth of twenty. Hitherto he had been a lad of the most ordinary

kind, but one Sunday evening, as he strolled upon Clerkenwell Green, and jested with his fellows at the expense of the Anarchists, Nihilists, Socialists, Social-Democrats, Fabians, Atheists, Agnostics, Anti-Ritualists, Anti-Vaccinators, and other ardent souls who were amusing the crowd, something, some influence begotten no doubt of the word-charged air, seemed to enter into him. His companions were surprised and pained to see him suddenly invert his hat upon the ground, raise his arms in an impassioned gesture, and begin to address them upon the wrongs of Guatemala. He spoke, without pausing for breath or hesitating for a word, for exactly one hour and twenty-four minutes, at the end of which time he came to himself, standing alone in the middle of Clerkenwell Green, everybody else having gone home to bed long ago ; even his hat was gone ; but he cared nothing, for he knew that he also was among the prophets.

His next step was to join an informal Debating Society, which met on Saturday evenings in a public house called THE LAST CHANCE, for the free discussion of current events and the freer exchange of personal abuse. His maiden speech lasted seventy-two minutes. His speech on the following Saturday night was a more serious affair, and ran over two hours. On the third Saturday, when he reached THE LAST CHANCE, its landlord informed him, with a sour face, that the Society had come to an end.

Mr. Fritterby now joined the Rosebery Avenue Parliament. In the first debate which he attended he spoke, at a late hour, and was still speaking when the gas was turned out by the hall-keeper, who then performed the same office for Mr. Fritterby. At the next debate he made a profound impression upon his fellow members, who were guilty of some disorder. Mr. Fritterby was not to be howled down, however, but stood to his guns until someone threw half a pomegranate at him and hit him full on the nose ; whereupon Mr. Fritterby, abandoning the thread of his arguments, sprang at the fellow and repaid the compliment with a clenched fist.

For this intemperate conduct both were expelled from the Parliament, in accordance with Rule I. The pomegranate-thrower felt very sore about it, though everyone told him that it is blessed to suffer that others may rejoice ; he said that it was no doubt blessed for the others, but what were they going to do about it ? So they re-elected him unobtrusively next week.

For some time Mr. Fritterby kept quiet and attended to the oil-and-colour business, for which he had a real natural aptitude. It had been a very good business when it descended to him on the death of his father, and in the ten years subsequent to that sad event he made it into a most valuable property. Indeed he could have sold it at any time and retired into great comfort, but he had the oil-and-colour habit and it never occurred to him to break himself of it. In the meantime he went on orating.

The pain of withholding his verbosity became once more too much for him in the March following his expulsion from the Rosebery Avenue Parliament. A ward election for his Borough Council happening most fortunately to be raging, he flung himself heart and soul into the cause of progress, and was entrusted one night with the task of seconding a resolution of confidence in his candidate. This he did in a speech of sixty-three minutes' duration, at the end of which time the meeting was so much influenced by his arguments that it unanimously adopted the amendment to the resolution, moved by a hireling of the opposition. Mr. Fritterby became a marked man, and, in spite of his constantly renewed offers to both sides to speak, was never again permitted to mount a platform in that, or any other, Borough election-contest.

His reputation however was not absolutely made, and he got off another speech in the County Council elections which took place in the same year. But that was his farewell to politics, for by the time a by-election for a Parliamentary Division was fought, the name of Fritterby was a name to conjure with.

When we remember that he achieved this distinction with not more than half a dozen speeches it must be allowed that Mr. Fritterby was no common orator.

He was now forced to return to the scene of his first triumph, Clerkenwell Green. There he became a regular Sunday speaker. During the rest of each week he went on building up the oil-and-colour business. As the strength of his lungs increased, the oil-and-colour business grew, the one acting upon the other ; for, while there is nothing finer for the general health than regular breathing-exercise, so there is nothing finer for the controlling mind in an oil-and-colour business than good health in the body which sustains it. In the course of a few years he had established two distinct reputations for himself ; the first,

that of a highly successful oil-and-colour-merchant ; the second, that of the longest-winded and most unfrequented orator on Clerkenwell Green.

These reputations he long continued to enjoy, and no doubt he would be enjoying them to this day, had not Mr. Benham issued a writ against him for slander.

One Sunday Mr. Fritterby was about half way through his discourse against vivisection, that is to say he had been speaking for not less than seventy minutes, and his audience, which varied in number from a half dozen to nobody, consisted for the moment of two little girls called Jane and Anne Taylor. To these damsels Mr. Benham added himself by-and-by and, after listening to Mr. Fritterby for several minutes, suddenly cried loudly the one word "Pshaw!" and emitted a hyæna-like laugh. Mr. Fritterby stopped dead, and pointing at Mr. Benham, that there might be no doubt about the object of his remarks, said, "You are a cad, sir, a dirty cad."

Mr. Benham, who was one of those people who only live while they are engaged in litigation, instantly whipped out a pocket-book, entered the names and addresses of Jane and Anne Taylor and Mr. Fritterby, and next morning himself filled up and issued a writ against Mr. Fritterby for slander, claiming damages to the extent of £10,000.

Mr. Fritterby was at first inclined to take professional advice about this, but he noticed, on examining the writ more closely, that no solicitor's name appeared on it, and it occurred to him that if his opponent could conduct his own case, why, so could he.

So he bought a book called *EVERY MAN HIS OWN LAWYER*, of which he had heard a favourable report, and plunged into litigation with a furious eagerness. After giving endless trouble to those unhappy men who have to do with law-cases in their preliminary stages (the Masters, Judges in Chambers, clerks of the Summons and Order departments, and others) the two antagonists stood at last, side by side, before the awful seat of Justice.

Both scorned to employ counsel.

Mr. Benham opened his case, and called Jane and Anne Taylor, who gave their evidence with sense and modesty, in spite of the highly irrelevant cross-examination to which they were subjected by Mr. Fritterby. Mr. Benham then sat down.

Mr. Fritterby called no witnesses, for he had none to call, but he was just about to begin an oration which, in view of the gravity of his position and the character of his audience, would certainly have lasted for three days, when the judge asked the jury if they were satisfied that there was no case shown. The jury said they were. The judge therefore desired Mr. Fritterby to resume his seat. But Mr. Fritterby had not mastered the whole of the Common Law Practice together with the whole of the law of Libel and Slander to keep it to himself. He wanted to tell the Court about it ; he refused to sit down ; he claimed his right to hurl the allegations of Mr. Benham in Mr. Benham's teeth.

"My good sir," said the judge, "you have won your case ; the jury give you their verdict. The plaintiff has certainly proved up to the hilt that you called him a cad, nay, a dirty cad. You have not denied it. He has himself demonstrated the justice of the epithet. But first of all, he has suffered no damage from your remark ; and, secondly, your words amount to vulgar abuse, but certainly not to slander. Verdict for the defendant."

Mr. Fritterby left the Court as one in a dream. He had won his case, and he had hardly opened his mouth. "Oh," he thought, "had I but been permitted to speak, how doubly, how trebly should I have won it ! I ought," he went on to himself, "to have been a barrister." Suddenly he gave a great cry, such as had never before been heard in the corridors of the Law Courts. "My stars !" he exclaimed "I will ; then they won't shut me up so easily."

He went straight across the road to the offices of the Middle Temple.

Mr. Fritterby is now a barrister. He disposed of the oil-and-colour business on most excellent terms just before he was called, and retired from trade with something like £2,000 a year of his own. He has thus plenty to live upon, and his surplus income he devotes to the expenses of the actions which he is always bringing against all kinds of people. He conducts them all himself, and he finds that, as there is no machinery by which counsel can be compelled to sit down, he has ample opportunity for indulging his genius for speaking, and can be sure always of having at least one judge for an audience.

WILLIAM CAINE

## THE STORY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION

No question can possibly present itself to any nation more supremely important than that of the education of its children. Other questions are more or less relative, but this one is of vital importance. Fiscal policy concerns a nation's financial prosperity ; Colonial and Foreign policy relate to its extension and stability ; questions of Army and Navy bear on its safety and its influence abroad ; but the Educator question involves the very life of the nation itself, for every nation is entirely and only what its children become.

Great Britain is to-day what those who were children of a generation or two ago are making it ; and the Great Britain of the future will lie in the hands of those who are its children to-day. The responsibility of their training for this high destiny is in our hands. We are not only moulding in our own day the affairs of our nation, but in this sense we are moulding them also for the future. For the future of every nation depends wholly upon the proper development of its children, and their education lies at the very root of the matter. This fact cannot be too clearly understood.

A question like this, if it is to be rightly considered, must be viewed as one altogether outside, and apart from, all political combinations and sectarian differences. And it is in this light that we desire now to present it, endeavouring to create a healthy interest in it, and to promote a right understanding of it, by sketching in merest outline the Story of National Education, its gradual growth from the smallest beginnings and its eventual endowment with public money.

Considering the warmth with which the subject of Elementary Education is being discussed to-day, it will be strange to read that all this burning zeal is comparatively young in the history of our nation. Nothing was seriously thought of any general system of National Education until early in the last

century, and no definite provision was made for it at all from public money until the century was well advanced. But we will not further anticipate what remains to be said.

A very brief glance at the earlier educational possibilities in this country will be interesting.

Before the Reformation these were few indeed. Such schools as there were, were mostly in the hands of the clergy and very often connected with the monasteries. But here and there a few existed which were in private hands; there were also some sixteen endowed Grammar Schools, Eton and Winchester being among them, and these were increased by as many more by those founded by Henry the Seventh; only a small proportion of these were actually free, and the needs of the really poor were almost entirely overlooked.

At the time of the Reformation, when Henry the Eighth suppressed the monasteries, he applied some of their funds to the endowment of several new Grammar Schools. These were largely added to by Edward the Sixth and every succeeding Sovereign until the time of the Commonwealth, when their foundation ceased. But although these schools were ostensibly founded for poor scholars, they mainly benefited only the poorer of the upper classes, and scarcely touched at all the really poor. These were still left practically without any available means for the education of their children, otherwise than by small private schools established in various districts by the most incompetent of teachers, who chose this method of earning a living and not because of any aptitude for such work.

This condition of things continued throughout the whole of the seventeenth century, during which the poorer population remained in the densest and most hopeless ignorance.

The opening of the eighteenth century, however, brought a vast improvement. It marked the rise of what are known as the Charity Schools, and upon these the country was practically dependent for the education of the children of the poorer classes for the next hundred years. These schools were founded by the newly formed Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. In its charter, granted in 1701, one of its objects was declared to be "erecting catechetical schools." It worked with commendable energy, and after forty years of existence had established nearly two thousand Charity Schools, with some forty thousand scholars.

The example set by this Society was, in course of time,

followed by various Corporations and even by many private individuals.

In these Charity Schools a very decided advance in National Education was made by the admission of girls, who were, of course, excluded from the Grammar Schools. This period, therefore, has a special interest as marking the commencement of publicly recognised female education in England, which had hitherto been completely ignored.

The teaching in these schools was, of course, of the most elementary sort, mainly confined to reading, writing, and the simplest arithmetic. The methods of teaching were extremely defective, the teachers being absolutely untrained and for the most part utterly inefficient. Nothing else could be expected.

Towards the close of the eighteenth century a definite further extension of National Education occurred in the rise of the Sunday Schools, mainly due to the example and influence of Robert Raikes of Gloucester about 1781 and onwards. They increased very rapidly and, as the scholars were invariably instructed in reading, they had a genuine educational bearing, over and above their religious uses, and reached many thousands of children who were quite unreached even by the existing Charity Schools. Their importance must be by no means overlooked in any account of National Education.

We come now to the commencement of the nineteenth century, when the subject becomes increasingly interesting. New efforts were made and two names, now almost forgotten, became very prominent, the names of the Rev. Dr. Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster. These two men may be said to have laid the foundation upon which our modern National Education was gradually built up.

Lancaster was a Quaker, the son of a Chelsea pensioner. In 1798, then an enthusiastic youth only eighteen years old, he opened a school in a large hired room in the Borough Road, Southwark, for the poorest children. Beginning with a hundred pupils, he rapidly increased the number to a thousand ; but feeling the lack of teachers, he commenced to utilise the more advanced of the children themselves. This was the germ from which eventually evolved the pupil-teacher system ; but at first the results were very poor. Still, it was a new departure, fraught with great possibilities. Under Lancaster's influence similar schools were rapidly established, and to manage the enterprise a

Society, entitled the Royal Lancasterian Institution, was founded in 1808. But Lancaster soon proved headstrong and incapable of working with others. He mismanaged the funds entrusted to the Institution, and eventually his connection with it was severed. In 1814 the Institution changed its title to that of the British and Foreign School Society, and has continued its work to the present time in an admirable way. Lancaster died in America in a condition of extreme poverty.

It was at this stage of the story of National Education that the religious difficulty between Churchmen and Nonconformists, which already had a well-recognised, though somewhat stifled, existence, assumed a more acute form. Lancaster's schools were outside the Church of England, and the teaching was unsectarian; the Bible was read and explained, but doctrines were wholly ignored, and these schools were spreading fast. This quickly aroused the vigorous opposition of Churchmen, who recognised that the influence of the Church was being seriously undermined by these schools.

The Rev. Dr. Bell now appeared upon the scene as the champion of Churchmen. He had been a military chaplain in India, and superintendent of the Orphanage for Soldiers' Children at Madras. From experiments made at this orphanage he firmly believed in using the more advanced of the children to instruct the more backward, and had, in 1797, published his views in a pamphlet which had suggested the same idea to Lancaster. In order to bring the newer educational efforts into the hands of the Church of England, he was instrumental in founding, in 1811, a society to rival the Lancasterian Institution. This was entitled the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Church of England, and is still actively at work, known by the briefer title of the National Society. Dr. Bell was its first superintendent, and worked it vigorously.

Thus these two men, in the early years of the nineteenth century, set influences to work which have played an important part in the story of National Education, and are playing it still with much success. But they divided the supporters of National Education into two opposing religious camps, and it has remained so divided ever since.

The National Society received, of course, the undivided support of the Church of England, and quickly outstripped the other

organisation, which very naturally received the entire support of the Nonconformists. It became by far the wealthier of the two and controlled an immense majority of the schools, largely taking over the work of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge already mentioned. The necessary funds, over and above the fees paid by the parents of the children, were provided by the public in the form of subscriptions paid to one Society or the other.

The cause of Infant Schools was adopted by Samuel Wilderspin, independently of these two Societies. He opened such a school in Spitalfields in 1820, and eventually several others were established in different parts of the country ; and in 1824 there was founded the London Infant School Society to extend this work. For the provision of efficient teachers for these schools the Society's basis was widened, the title of the Home and Colonial Infant School Society was adopted, and a Training College was founded later on, in 1836, which was the first organised effort in that direction.

Such was the position of National Education,—carried on entirely by these three Societies, and supported wholly by voluntary effort—when the Reform Bill of 1832 was passed ; and we now are approaching the time when voluntary effort was to receive assistance from Government grants. The subject of National Education had already received Parliamentary notice. Indeed, the first attempt at legislation about it was made in 1807. Mr. Whitbred introduced a Parochial Schools Bill, giving power to the overseers, with the consent of the Vestry, to raise money for establishing and maintaining Parochial Schools. Much modified, it passed the Commons, but the Lords rejected it, and matters went on as before.

The most ardent advocate in Parliament of National Education at this time was Henry (afterwards Lord) Brougham. In 1816 he moved for, and obtained, the appointment of a Select Committee to investigate the educational condition of London, Westminster, and Southwark. After searching inquiry, under Brougham's guidance, it reported much mismanagement of funds held in trust for educational purposes, and revealed that in London alone some hundred and twenty thousand children were entirely untaught. This Committee continued its work, making reports at intervals for several years ; but little or nothing came of it.

Brougham's next step was to introduce, in 1820, a bill for promoting Education in England and Wales, providing for money to be levied by the Parish officers, but placing the control of the schools in the hands of the Church. The Nonconformists strongly opposed this, and the bill was ultimately withdrawn.

A date of considerable importance in our story was August 17th, 1833, as marking the first Parliamentary grant. The report of the Committee of Supply contained an entry of £20,000 "for the purposes of education," which, after much discussion, was carried. Its application, however, was specially limited to the actual building of school-houses, on condition that half their cost should be raised by public subscription. None of it was to be spent on school maintenance, but as there existed no Government official to administer the grant, it was handed over to the National and British Societies to be expended at their discretion. It was divided between them, not equally, but in proportion to the amounts which each was able to collect to meet it, and the National Society, which had by far the wealthier supporters, received considerably the larger share. This continued for the next few years.

Meanwhile the Parliamentary recognition of education advanced. In June, 1834, Mr. Roebuck moved for a Committee to inquire into "the means of establishing a system of National Education," and to investigate the use of the grant already given and the need of any further grants. This Committee sat for two years, and though much useful information was obtained, nothing practical, for the moment, resulted from its labours.

Another date of much interest was February 12th, 1839, when the unsupervised expenditure of public grants by irresponsible societies was ended by the establishment of a Committee of Council on Education, at the instance of the Marquis of Lansdowne and Lord John Russell, to assume this important function. This met with much opposition from the Church party, who saw in it the passing from them of educational control. Various acts of useful legislation succeeded during the next few years, and the Legislature assumed a grip upon the whole system which it has maintained ever since.

The Committee of Council on Education worked more or less harmoniously with the National and British Societies, always, however, assuming an increasing control, and issuing regularly its minutes for the management of the schools, the appropriation

and use of the Government grants, and the duties of School Inspectors, whose importance had become thoroughly recognised. Educational grants rapidly increased, and these were met by increased contributions, through the two Societies, of public money. Real progress was made in National Education, not only in the multiplication of schools, but in the number and variety of the subjects of instruction, in increased provision for the training of teachers and in the supply of books and other necessities for teaching ; but the actual details of all this would lie outside the limits of this article.

The Committee of Council on Education was, in 1856, replaced by a Government Education Department, to which increased powers were granted, and during the following years it introduced many important improvements in every department of school management.

But the most important date connected with our subject is the year 1870, which witnessed an entirely new departure in National Education. Hitherto, the Government scheme, as we have seen, was entirely confined to assisting, by Parliamentary grant, schools already more or less supported by voluntary effort, and mainly established by the two Societies. But it became at last only too evident that such effort, even State-aided, could never fully supply the educational needs of the country. The Government must take the initiative in the provision and maintenance of new schools wherever the existing ones did not meet the requirements of any district.

To meet the situation, an Act was passed establishing School Boards. These were to be elected by the ratepayers of any district, with power to levy rates for the provision and maintenance of new schools, which they were to manage, and to frame by-laws compelling the attendance of the children. The Voluntary Schools still remained as before. On this dual system of a combination between rate-supported schools under the management of the School Boards and the State-aided Voluntary Schools the National Education was carried on with growing success for over thirty years, all under the watchful supervision of the Education Department.

This Department was itself remodelled in 1900, when the supreme management of National Education passed into the hands of a Board of Education in definite connection with the Cabinet.

In 1891 a most important principle was introduced. It then became recognised that, if Education was to be made compulsory by the enforced attendance of the children, it must also be made absolutely free to them. A bill was passed providing for a payment of ten shillings for each child from five to fourteen years of age, in place of the school fees hitherto paid by the parents. The cost of this was then estimated at £2,000,000 a year ; but it has since immensely increased.

But the system of Board Schools and Voluntary Schools working side by side under separate authorities, as arranged by the Act of 1870, was terminated by that of 1902. It was recognised that the Voluntary Schools, which could not, like the Board Schools, draw upon the rates, found it increasingly difficult to maintain their efficiency on fluctuating voluntary contributions, and they also were put upon the rates. School Boards were abolished, with a view to placing the entire elementary education of the country under the general control of the same local authorities. In their place District Local Education Authorities were established to take over the management both of the Board and the Voluntary Schools, the former being termed "provided" schools and the latter "unprovided."

This Act came into operation on April 1st, 1903, and assigned to these Local Authorities the duty of making all needful provision, by means of a local rate, for the public Elementary Schools within their districts. The Provided Schools were to be managed by a body of managers appointed by the Local Authorities, while the management of the Unprovided Schools was to be in the hands of a body of managers, four of whom were to be appointed in accordance with the provisions of the trust deed of each school and two by the Local Authorities.

This is exactly how the matter stands to-day, when new Educational arrangements are being so warmly discussed. The attempts made by the present Government to settle the question have, so far, had no result. What it will do remains to be seen.

The two main points at issue are the religious difficulty, with all the details it involves, and the largely expressed desire that, as all the schools are now wholly maintained by public money, they should all equally be under entire popular control. The religious difficulty is nothing new. It has existed, in an acute form, as we have already seen, for almost a hundred years ; and so long as any sort of religious instruction is given in Government

Schools, it will probably remain in one shape or another. Nor is the idea of complete popular control at all a novelty. Indeed, every advance in Government Education has drifted very decidedly in that direction, and the general principle is now very fully accepted.

That there are very real difficulties involved in all these points admits of no serious question, but it is not in our purpose to discuss them here. Our only desire has been to give such a general outline of the story of National Education as will interest the reader and enable him, with a clear understanding of the whole subject, to enter with intelligence into the questions involved, whatever may be his political or religious opinions.

With this object in view we have purposely abstained from naming the political complexion of the Governments by which the various changes have been made, in order that the latter may be considered and judged upon their own merits, with the mind unprejudiced by any other motive or desire than to come to a right judgment on a subject of such supreme importance to our national welfare.

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